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THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRAM OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
MENNONITE CHURCHES OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT

by

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PREFACE

With the exuberance and self-confidence of youth a young man approached Jesus one day with the question: "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus looking upon him loved him, and in his love for him he challenged the young man to give up everything to which his heart was slavishly attached and accept in its stead companionship with him. This was the greatest offer ever made to the young man. He refused and went away sorrowful.

Today Jesus is looking with love and yearning upon the youth of the world. He longs to offer them the greatest blessing he can bestow -- companionship with him. But all too often these young people do not receive the blessing because those who are Christ's representatives on earth fail to see in youth what Christ saw, they fail to look upon youth with the same yearning love with which Christ looked upon the young man. This is the tragedy in many churches today; and, as a result, many young people go away sorrowful, not because they deliberately reject Christ's offer as did the young man, but because they have not been invited to accept that offer.

Young people are leaving the church because they have no interest in spiritual things, is the reason commonly advanced. However, the reason might be more truly stated conversely: The underlying reason for their leaving is the fact that in many cases the church displays no interest in them and apparently is unaware of their presence except when they present a problem. It is taken for granted, of course, that they

attend the activities of the church; but they are not made to feel that they are needed by the church.

As a whole, the Mennonite Church thus far has not had to face the problem of losing its young people in this manner to any great degree; but as secularizing influences continue to increase and as young people widen their contacts through better transportation and communication facilities, let the church be on its guard lest it also find itself confronted with this problem. Evidences of it are already there. Let it examine its program now and revise it, if need be, to prevent this fate which has befallen many churches of the land. Let it accept the challenge which youth presents and not, in failing to do so, permit a situation to develop which will be difficult and perhaps impossible to solve.

To do this the church will have to examine its program and methods, its aims and objectives, under the scrutiny of God's purpose for it, and be alert to new methods and means while continuing to fulfill the old and primary purpose--ministering to the people with the life-giving Word of God.

Gift of the Author

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INTRODUCTION

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRAM OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
MENNONITE CHURCHES OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement and Definition of the Subject

"When an individual takes membership in a church he lays a responsibility upon that church to provide him with pastoral care and leadership."¹ Actually, what does the church provide for its young members? Is what it provides adequate to meet all the needs of youth, or does it minister only to one area--the spiritual--leaving the other areas to be ministered to by secular organizations? If the latter is true, what can the church do to provide a program that will complete its mission to its young people? These are questions the church must ask itself as it takes inventory of its young people's program. Specifically, these are questions the Mennonite Church must ask itself.

In the light of the above questions, it is the proposition of this thesis to make an analytical study of the young people's program of the churches in the Western District of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America. This is the largest of the six districts of the General Conference and is comprised of the sixty-one churches in the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, Southern Nebraska, Colorado,

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1. Earl A. Roadman, The Country Church and Its Program, p. 44.

Texas, and Mexico.¹ Kansas is centrally located, and by far the greatest number of churches and the largest Mennonite population of the district are found here.

Since the Mennonites are a rural people and most of the churches are located in rural areas or in small towns of fewer than 2500 inhabitants, this study will be approached from the rural angle.² Contrary to the popular opinion of rural churches, however, many of these churches are not small, struggling churches. This will be apparent from glancing at the list of churches with their memberships.³

The young people, as referred to in this study, are those between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five, or roughly, the high school, college, and post-college ages. Because of the definite break between grade and high school as a result of the educational set-up of the school system, this grouping proves the most satisfactory.

B. Purpose of the Study

This study is made for the purpose of trying to discover what the churches coming under the study are doing for their young people

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1. Of the 61 churches, 40 are located in Kansas; 16, in Oklahoma; two, in Nebraska; and one each, in Texas, Colorado, and Mexico. The church located in Cuauahtemoc, Chih, Mexico, though included in the district, is excluded from the study because of the extreme difference in set-up and nature.
2. Only about ten per cent of the churches studied are located in towns or cities of more than 2500 inhabitants, and even these draw heavily upon the rural communities for their constituencies. (According to the 1936 census of religious bodies there are 112 General Conference Mennonite churches in the United States, with 26, 535 members. Of these 112 churches (79%) are rural.--See J. Winfield Fretz, "Mennonites and Rural Life," The Mennonite, January 18, 1944, p. 7.)
3. See post, p. 44.

to meet their needs. After determining what the churches are doing for youth, an attempt will be made to offer suggestions for the improvement or the strengthening of the young people's program, which, in turn, would strengthen the church as a whole. For not only do the young people need the church, which no one will deny, but the church also needs the young people.

C. The Sources of the Study
and the
Method of Procedure

In order to have a basis for the evaluation of the young people's program of the Mennonite churches, the young people's work of the rural church in general will be studied. This will be done mostly by the use of denominational publications--books and pamphlets. The source of information in regard to the youth work of the Mennonite churches is derived from questionnaires that were sent to all the pastors of the Western District;¹ from results of discussions held by several young people's groups regarding the youth work in their churches; from personal contact of the writer as a member of one of the churches, as originally a member of another of the communities in which three strong churches are located, as a high school teacher in the same community later, and as a Vacation Bible School teacher for several terms in another of the churches; and from contact with young people from most of the churches included at the Western District Young People's Retreat.

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1. For a copy of the questionnaire and of the suggested discussion program see Appendix, pp. 157-164.

First of all, then, a study will be made of the rural church and its young people today to determine its problems, its advantages, and its present trends. This will be followed by a detailed study of the program of the Mennonite churches of the Western District, centering the investigation around the five areas of the Christian education curriculum--worship, study, social and recreational life, personal Christian living, and service. An attempt will then be made to offer suggestions for an adequate program to meet the needs of the youth of these churches in each of the five areas given and others in which the church must minister to its youth.

CHAPTER I

THE RURAL CHURCH AND YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

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THE RURAL CHURCH AND YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

A. Introduction

The "rural billion" is a term often applied to the farm and small-town population of the world. In America almost one half of the population is classified as rural. Of this number, some thirty million live on farms and around twenty-seven million more in small towns and villages.¹ More than ten million of this number are young people.² It is with this latter group in particular that this chapter will concern itself, for it is toward this group that the rural church in its young people's program must feel a sense of obligation and mission. It is this group which definitely challenges the rural church, for in an average community more than half of the youth population is not related to the church.³

The young people that are connected with the church are often not served adequately by the church; therefore, many of them are lost to the church. This would be a tragedy if it happened in only a very few instances; but when the numbers thus lost rise to staggering proportions, the church should examine itself to see where it is failing, not only the young people and their Master, but the homes, the communities, and even the nation and the world.

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1. "The urban population in 1940 was 56.5 per cent of the total population; the rural farm population . . . was 22.9 per cent; the rural non-farm . . . was 20.5 per cent."--The World Almanac, 1945, p. 488.
2. See David Cushman Coyle, "Rural Youth," p. 5.
3. See Earl A. Roadman, op. cit., pp. 65-73.

The following perhaps is an extreme case, but to a lesser degree it could be duplicated in almost any church. When the records in a church in Wisconsin were examined, it was found that in twenty years 216 young people had been added to the church and of these 203, or 94 per cent, had not remained true to their pledges.¹ They had received a brief inspiration and caught the vision of something they desired; but somehow, somewhere, the church failed in leading them on from there.

Where does the fault lie? Why have so many young people been lost to the church and so many more never become identified with it? Has its appeal failed to challenge them to a life of service and usefulness?

It would be unfair, however, to mention only the negative aspects. There are, of course, many churches that are aware of the serious implications of the task God has entrusted to them and are fostering a dynamic spiritual life, challenging young and old alike and exerting their influence in the homes, communities, and the regions beyond with their message of redemption. And thus they become what the country church ought to be--the heart and soul of today's rural community and life as it has been, ideally, since the Puritans first knelt on Plymouth Rock.

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1. Ibid., p. 65.

B. Importance of the Rural Church

The sphere in which the rural church serves is supposedly a very small one. Actually, however, it is a worldwide sphere. The importance of its service cannot be over-estimated.

1. To the Young People

The church is a laboratory in which young people experiment in Christian living. As such, it must provide them with opportunities to carry on this experiment. It is not enough to give them instructions in how to carry it on. The young people must be given duties to perform, for they "learn to do by doing" here as in any other realm of experience. The reason behind the often justifiable complaint that young people will not go to church can often be found in the failure of the church to challenge them with worthwhile and difficult tasks. Youth want to be up and doing. They are bored to sit back and listen to moral platitudes that have no direct relation with life as they see it. They are practical and idealistic at the same time; and, therefore, they must get something out of church or they will have little to do with it. As E. L. Kirkpatrick says:

"They want the church to give them spiritual uplift, moral direction, religious knowledge, and a place where they can meet others who are striving to live fuller lives and make the world better. Of course the principal value of the church to all people is the ministration to the spirit. There is a difference, however, between the spiritual needs of youth and those of maturity. Preaching and programs which may satisfy adults often have little meaning for young people. Worship, moreover, is not a matter of sitting dumbly before altar and pulpit; it involves individual participation. The religious service that has real value is the one in which a person shares--the one which carries over all seven days of the week. . . ."¹

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1. E. L. Kirkpatrick, Guideposts for Rural Youth, p. 85.

The same idea is brought out by David Cushman Coyle in the government pamphlet, "Rural Youth," where he emphasizes the fact that it is not so much what American young people are told as what they see about them in their daily lives and what they themselves experience that determine what they think and feel.¹ It is here that the church must make a decided contribution--life, not sanctimonious platitudes; experience, not doctrines and creeds alone.

The rural church does not have as many competitors bidding for the time of its young people as the city church. On the whole, the young people of churches in rural areas have been more faithful in church attendance than have their city cousins. But in these days of widened contacts through the automobile and the telephone, the rural church must examine itself; for no less than a dynamic, challenging motive for a spiritual life of service will be able to hold the youth of today.

The present-day young people want a motive for life, and the church can supply the only worthy one. "Youth wants a philosophy of action,"² says Randolph. He continues:

"The church probably has more rural youth in its membership than any other rural institution or organization. Are we helping them to discover themselves, their spiritual abilities and powers, in the church and community? Have we been too much interested in organizations in the church for youth rather than in youth itself? We have preached a great deal at youth and we have created a great many things for them with the hope of building up their faith and loyalty to the church; but too often our church organizations, our doctrines, our creeds, and our preachments have not been open doors of behavior patterns on the level of youth's interests.

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1. See Coyle, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
2. Benson Y. Landis, "American Rural Life," p. 41, quoting H. S. Randolph, "Rural Youth of the Church Today," in The Missionary Review of the World, July, 1939.

"Youth in the country would like to see in their churches and in the religious life of their people beauty and order, together with a vital program of action. They want responsibility for doing things of great moment. They want a recreational program that embodies the development of skills and ability as well as amusement. They want a co-operative way of life for the community. They want a spiritual program which ties them to God through the church. They are asking for a voice in the midst of a faulty education and in the breakdown of economic order and unemployment. They are asking to be heard in a world of prejudices, where there is a denial of opportunities; where there is poverty, war and rumors of war. Youth calls for a prophet to lead them. They are very eager to know about religion. They want to see the church tie up vitally with the rest of their life, with their school program, their clubs, societies, and their vocational interest."¹

The importance of the church to the young people themselves cannot be over-estimated. If the church fails them during the crucial years of their lives when life decisions are made, the damage caused is irreparable, both to the "lives" thus lost, as well as to the life of the church. The argument is often advanced that the very continuance of the church depends upon its young people. This is true; but how flimsy seems the argument that the church needs youth for its continuance in the future when the need of youth for the church and the need of the church for youth is so great NOW.

Max Beerbohm has pictured the youth of the nineteenth century as a large, comfortable man with side-whiskers and a white tie. As he envisages the future, he sees a still larger man in a bigger tie. The companion picture of the youth of the twentieth century features a young man stooping, wounded, and with a mourning band on his sleeve. As he looks at the future, he sees a mist, a void which is empty but for one thing--a question mark.² The church alone has the answer to that question mark for rural youth today.

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1. Ibid.
2. See W. A. Cameron, Jesus and the Rising Generation, pp. 106-107.

2. To the Home

The average rural home, from the standpoint of the future population of the nation, is more than twice as important as the average city home, according to Mark Dawber.¹ Since statistics show that this is so, the rural home has an extremely important place in the building up and the conservation of the fundamental values--spiritual, moral, social, and physical--which will determine the future attitudes of the nation. The church must not fail to emphasize these values and to utilize the natural advantages and conditions of country life conducive to the proper interpretation and conservation of these values. Most rural people themselves are not aware of the significant part they play in determining civilization. They often fail to recognize the values of childhood, the home, the community, and the land from which they derive their sustenance as of primary importance, and are inclined to consider these things as very ordinary, perhaps even drab, while looking with envy upon the more favored, as they suppose, city dwellers. It is, therefore, the duty and privilege of the church to use these unrecognized avenues of spiritual and moral strength, while at the same time creating an appreciation for them in the hearts of the rural people.

The church must realize that the home is the cornerstone of Christian civilization, that it is the soil in which the roots of character are found. To make the character it creates noble and Christlike, it is necessary that the church work hand in hand with the home; for only as the church provides the inspiration, creates sentiments, and

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1. See Mark Dawber, Rebuilding Rural America, p. 97. Rural homes have an average of $3\frac{3}{4}$ children per home, while city homes do not reproduce themselves with only $1\frac{2}{3}$ children per home.

gives practical help for Christian living during the week in the homes of the community it serves does it fulfill its God-given mission.

The importance of the church to the home can perhaps be best expressed by the ten points which Mary Heald Williamson discusses in answer to her question: "What kind of a church will we give today's countrywoman and her family?"¹

1. The rural church which would adequately serve the countrywoman and her family must place first emphasis upon spiritual values.
2. The rural church must put content and meaning into the term--spiritual.
3. The countrywoman needs a church that serves every rural family as a unit.
4. The countrywoman needs a church that will do its part in "rescuing for human society the native values of rural life."
5. The rural church must approach its task through educational processes.
6. The rural church must be willing to heed the words of the student of rural sociology.
7. The countrywoman needs a church that acknowledges the community as the parish.
8. The countrywoman needs a co-operative church for her family.
9. Today's countrywoman wants a church that leads the way not only in religious but community co-operation.
10. The countrywoman needs a church that is meeting the needs of youth and childhood.

In her elaboration of the third point, "The countrywoman needs a church that serves every rural family as a unit," Mrs. Williamson says:

"As the rural church seeks to build a program for different age groups let it ask, 'Is this building up or tearing down family unity?' Let minister and choir feel their responsibility in providing a Sunday service that shall be the high moment of the week; a service that shall repay country mothers who plan their Friday and Saturday work, who press and clean and with pride sit with their families in the pew on Sunday. We could all do more to make beautiful the sanctuary and the service for families who come seeking light on the everyday tasks."²

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1. See Mary Heald Williamson, *The Countrywoman and Her Church*, pp. 34-55.
2. Ibid., p. 37.

Some of the specific problems that the Christian home and church in the country must attack together are (1) the tendency to spend a late Saturday night in nearby towns and the consequent late choring on Sunday morning, (2) making of Sunday a holiday for long trips to relatives and friends rather than a holyday as it is meant to be, (3) depreciation of the values of the farm and life in the country, (4) the tendency to disparage any show of affection within the family, and (5) the inclination of youth to reject the standards of conduct and morality of their elders.

The church should help the home by creating sentiment against the evil and secularizing influences and emphasizing those factors that raise the home and community to higher standards. Then the church will truly be the ally of the home as Ralph A. Felton so aptly describes it:

"In these days when families are separated by so many interests, the rural church brings them all together on Sunday morning. It is the only family organization left in the countryside today. It is of interest to all ages; it serves all; it unites all."¹

3. To the Community

"The country community, like every other society, is united in a symbol, and in the country this symbol is the church. The spire rising above the trees, by the roadside, serves as a pivot of rural interest."²

The country church has a responsibility to the whole community which it serves, for it is the most important factor in the community. Of course, its first task is the regeneration of the individuals in its area; but this should have as its inevitable result the Christianizing

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1. Ralph A. Felton, What's Right with the Rural Church, p. 9.
2. Warren H. Wilson, The Church of the Open Country, p. 187.

of the relationships between neighbors. Rapking says:

"As the Kingdom of God comes to a community all of the relationships of life in the community will become more Christian. Folk will be Christian every day of the week in all their relationships. They will think of going to church, reading the Bible, and praying as a means to an end--that of living the Christian life. All the economic, social, educational and spiritual relationships of life will be under the direction of the Christian spirit."¹

And Ira D. Scrogum offers the following description of the true Christian community:

"A Christ-centered church in a church-centered community--that is the formula for a Christian rural community. By a church-centered community we mean one which looks to the church for leadership in all its activities. . . .

"Religion is not something separate and apart from life. It is life itself. It is the 'abundant' life. Religion, therefore, must be identified with life if it is to be effective in community betterment. . . .

"Even though the primary task of the church is that of personal salvation, personal salvation is not a complete experience until it bears fruit in community living. The corporate life cannot rise above the level of the individual lives of the citizens who make up the social unit. In its final analysis society is made up of an aggregate of individual lives, each of whom raises or lowers the level of community living. The church must provide the ideal for personal living, as well as the dynamic and the environment whereby each individual may live up to his highest possibilities as an individual Christian."²

If the country church is thus devoted to its task and establishes itself as the focal point from which powerful influences radiate into all the various aspects of the community life, it will naturally have its effect upon the young people of the community and bear fruit in and through them, not only in the immediate environs, but also wherever any of them are led in the fulfillment of their life's purpose.

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1. A. H. Rapking, Building the Kingdom of God in the Countryside, p. 17.
2. Landis, op. cit., p. 40, quoting Ira D. Scrogum, "The Search for the Christian Rural Community," Rural America, May, 1941.

4. To the City, Nation, and World

As has already been seen, the population growth of America comes almost entirely from the rural areas since city homes do not reproduce themselves. Statistics show that over fifty per cent of rural youth leave the country for the city.¹ Therefore, the future of America is literally dependent upon rural youth.

The country church has often lamented the loss of some of the best of its children to the city church; but when the implication of the above is fully realized, the church fails to fulfill its mission if it does not set out to inculcate in its youth the high standards and ideals of Christianity so that their influence upon the life in the city of which they become a part may be permeated with the spiritual and moral values which have been indelibly stamped upon their lives and souls by the country church.

Harry E. Bicksler has called the Christian young people who feed the city churches "the greatest crop the country ever produced."² What a challenge this presents to the country churches of the land, but how few there are that realize their importance in this respect!

The importance of the rural church also extends beyond the cities of America. Geographically, it is unlimited, for it is world-wide; sociologically, it is unlimited, for it extends into every profession, vocation, and area of life. Sundt says on this point:

"The country church has played an honourable part in this fourth fellowship."³ Its sons and daughters are missionaries in every

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1. See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
2. Harry E. Bicksler, The Parish of the Templed Hills, p. 13.
3. The fellowship of creating a Christlike world.

clime and country. Proportionately, the country church shares more generously her youth and money with all the world than any other organization. Each year thousands leave rural districts to seek their fortunes in cities and countries far away from home. Many of them become leaders in business, industry, politics, professional life, the ministry, and statemanship. Like the Mississippi River, which has its source in the obscure waters of Ithasca Park, but gradually broadens into a mighty stream bringing blessing and abundance to the Central and Southern states, so the country church and its contributions, unknown and unsung, sends forth from villages and countryside a perennial stream of new vitality and strength to the cities.¹

The country church need never fear that its influence will be lost, nor need the rural minister feel that his task is an unimportant one; for the best way of sending their influence into every part of the world and into every area of life is to exert it where the majority of the future population is being reared, the rural community. That is the challenge the country church and its minister face; theirs is a worldwide task for their influence is worldwide.

C. Problems Peculiar to the Rural Church

There are many problems that the rural church shares with the city church; there are other problems that are peculiar to the rural church. This discussion will concern itself with the latter.

1. Isolation and Distance

Even though the automobile and improved roads have done much to bring distances closer together and the radio and newspaper have brought the news of the world into the farm home, there still is a certain amount of isolation for rural young people. They have few contacts with the outside world; there are few opportunities for cultural and aesthetic privileges.

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1. Edwin E. Sundt, The Country Church and Our Generation, pp. 113-114.

Distance may be, and often is, a definite handicap to the rural church. Because of the scattered membership it is usually difficult to carry out a well-rounded program since many find it impossible to attend the functions at the church because of the travel involved. One trip a week may be all they can allow themselves. This is a handicap to a certain extent; but it may also be an asset, for often, if privileges are at a premium, more value is attached to them. And it may be this very "handicap" of isolation and distance that keeps the church life as the center of interest, the event looked forward to throughout the week. The church must keep it so, else it may be shifted to the Saturday night shopping trip into town.

2. Lack of Education and Adequate Leadership

Rural young people do not have the educational advantages enjoyed by those in the city. In fact, in many rural areas there are no consolidated or rural high schools, and the average young person finds it well-nigh impossible to get any education beyond the eighth grade, if he gets even that. This has a definite effect upon the church because it keeps much of the potential leadership undeveloped. Hence there is a dearth of leadership in many rural churches. This is a tragic situation since the country church, being usually small, has an ideal set-up for the training of leaders. With the smaller number of members in the church each one should be enlisted to do something.

The drift to the cities also cripples many country churches since they are usually the leaders that leave. Many pastors complain about this and finally take the attitude, "What's the use?" One pastor, realizing the necessity for trained leadership and seeing no way of

changing the drift to the city, recognized it as his task to train new leaders from those who stayed in the community. "You can do just as much as you've developed leadership for, and you can't do any more,"¹ is his conclusion.

Rural youth need the guidance and help of trained leaders, and they need to be trained as leaders themselves; therefore it is one of the great tasks of the country church of today to train leaders for today and tomorrow.

3. Lack of Rural-centered Materials and Adequate Equipment

Although almost half of the people in the United States are rural and the proportion of rural church-going people is even greater, the materials prepared for worship and religious education are almost exclusively non-rural in character. And since this is also true of the curriculum materials of the public schools and colleges, it is small wonder that all too often rural young people think in terms of the city and are dissatisfied with life on the farm. Colleges send back teachers to the country schools whose ideals, objectives, and methods are all designed for teaching in the city.

The teaching materials of the country church should be related to life in the country. As Rapping says:

"We are simply confusing our message for our people if we do not relate it to the environment of the country. One does not throw aside preoccupation with his daily task, his ways of thinking and his attitudes when he approaches God in worship on Sunday. He expects to find help at his church, and help for him as he meets his weekday work. He expects his pastor to talk his language and use illustrations that are meaningful to him. This is as it should be."²

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1. Felton, Our Templed Hills, p. 145.
2. Rapping, The Town and Country Pulpit, p. 6.

In recent years much has been done to raise rural life to its rightful place in many denominations by the establishment of rural church departments and rural fellowships, but much still remains to be done; and until the country boy and girl can be given a textbook built around their environment, the city will continue to cast its spell over country youth, the blessings and advantages of life in the country will remain unrecognized, and the disadvantages will continue to be magnified.

The equipment of the country church also is often very inadequate. This is partly due to the fact that most rural churches cannot raise large budgets because of poor memberships.¹ A second reason for the lack of equipment is the failure to see the need on the part of leaders and people. Perhaps "ignorance is bliss" in some cases; but it is inexcusable in Christian leaders when their failure to discover and use the best methods deprives the children of whom Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," of their fullest development and makes for mediocre or poor teaching. Felton wonders whether the greatest sin committed in our churches is not that of mediocrity.² Work in the Kingdom demands the best; no poor work should be tolerated. Therefore, the best equipment under the circumstances should be provided. Sometimes, in small churches, this will mean merely making the best possible use of the equipment that is

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1. It is rather sardonic that the churches that have the smallest number of trainees should enjoy the greatest treasury of equipment and then be dependent for their continuance upon those trained under these adverse circumstances. The city church would, therefore, be helping itself by helping the small rural church in training the youth who will eventually feed the city church.
2. See Felton, What's Right with the Rural Church, p. 79.

there; and often there are unrealized possibilities in the equipment on hand. It must be kept in mind that "expenditure for the maintenance and equipment of churches is not a donation, not a charity, but an investment upon which both positive and negative dividends are realized."¹

4. Increasing Secularization

As the opportunities for education have increased in many rural communities with the coming of the centralized high school, the activities provided by the school in club and extra-curricular work have also increased to the extent that many young people devote most of their waking hours to activities outside the home and the church. Consequently, the public school, rather than the home and the church, is now setting the standards of conduct and morality. This would not be so alarming if the public school were the handmaid of the church as in days gone by. But as it is, this situation presents a distinct problem to the church. It results in a decided secularization of life. To counteract this tendency Mark Rich suggests:

"It is not our task to do away with the wholesome and welcomed aspects of the new order. But, as those interested in the spiritual development of youth, it must be recognized that we fail unless somehow we can plant a spiritual core in the environment that moulds and makes rural youth. Through supplying Christian leadership for the secular program of the rural community the church may expand its influence among youth."²

5. Undesirable Attitudes of Rural People

Perhaps some of the attitudes found among rural folk present a problem which has its roots in all of the preceding problems and would be solved automatically with the solving of the others. At present,

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1. J. W. Jent, The Challenge of the Country Church, p. 32.
2. Mark Rich and others, Youth Work in the Rural Church, p. 15.

however, it remains a problem for the church to solve. There is the attitude of depreciation of farm life and a consequent inferiority complex which often leads to an "I-don't-care" attitude.

The feeling that the work on the farm is drudgery and "doesn't pay" by those who measure everything by financial returns also presents a problem which the church must correct through education. This attitude seems to be on the increase because of the industrialization of farm life through power machinery and the trend from ownership to tenancy. If the farmer can be made to feel that he is working in closer cooperation with God than perhaps any other group of people and that he has received the soil he tills as a holy trust to preserve and improve for the millions of the future while at the same time getting the most from it at the present, this attitude might be changed.

But most deplorable of all is the attitude of many rural people toward their children. A decided lack of affection is often evidenced. The love for them is there, no doubt; but there is no expression of it. Often work put-out receives so much emphasis that children are deprived of play at an early age to do work that is really too heavy for them. This has a decided effect upon the attitudes of young people who are either inhibited in their expression of affection or go to extremes at the first opportunity and get into trouble.

Another attitude which often hampers progress and hinders the church from doing its best work is the belief that the old is the best, the glorification of "the good old days." Rural church people must come to see that, even though the message of the church is the same and always will be, changing conditions require the adoption of new

methods to meet the new demands. A minister who can travel ten times as far in the same time it took the circuit rider or evangelist of the nineteenth century to cover the same distance and whose people also have much wider contacts and more leisure time should not be expected to use the same methods in the carrying on of his work any more than he should be expected to use the same means of travel these men used.

The details of the church's program in solving the above problems will, of course, vary since they arise out of life and must be solved in the light of local situations. In general, however, it may be said that through an emphasis upon the values of life rather than upon the things possessed much can be done to correct these attitudes. If the church in its ministry touches the life and experiences of the people, Christianity will become a vital part of the everyday actions and thoughts of the people.

D. Advantages Possessed by the Rural Church

There are many advantages inherent in life in the country that are distinct aids to the work of the church. A few of these will be discussed here.

1. Solidarity of the Group

There is a closer bond between members of a community in the country than there is between those in the city even though the distance separating them is greater. There is the bond of similar interests, sympathetic understanding, and often united hardship or calamity. These create a greater solidarity and unity, and it is natural for country

folk truly to unite in prayer and praise because often what affects one affects all.

2. Advantages Inherent in Rural Life

The following points are based upon those given by Roadman in a chapter dealing with the resources and advantages of the country church.¹

(1) The country church is close to nature, which gives an incomparable resource upon which to build the Christian conception of God and his relationship to man. (2) The country church is close to the family, which must assume larger and larger proportions in religious education. (3) The country provides excellent resources for character formation. Some of the habits naturally inculcated through farm life are industry, thrift, management, and creative effort. (4) Country life makes for close personal relationships. For the church the close relationship between pastor and people is especially valuable. (5) The physical freedom enjoyed furnishes the bodies and souls of men a better chance for growth and wholesome development.

E. Present Trends in Youth Work in the Rural Church

An investigation of recent denominational and government publications relative to work with rural youth reveals very encouraging trends of which all church leaders should be aware. Some of these trends are not related directly with the church, but they have their effects upon the church. Others are not confined only to youth.

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1. See Roadman, op. cit., pp. 23-30.

1. Increasing Awareness of Rural Youth and Its Problems

Rural youth has sometimes been referred to as the "forgotten generation." Today, however, they have been drawn more into the lime-light, and leaders are taking note of them and their problems. It has already been noted that the rural church has problems to face and challenges to meet. As leaders have become aware of these problems, many of them have also set out to find solutions. Some denominations have, therefore, established rural church departments on an equal basis with their other departments. This new awareness of the needs of rural youth with the subsequent attempts to meet them is also noticed in other community, county, state, and national organizations. The considerable number of government and other bulletins dealing with these problems gives indication of a growing emphasis on the interests and needs of this long neglected group.

2. Recognition of Values Inherent in Country Life

In the past the farmer has been looked down upon, and farming has not enjoyed as dignified a status as other vocations in the regard of most people. Country people as a whole were considered as being "from the sticks." This, in great measure, accounts for the disparaging attitude many rural young people have taken toward life in the country and their ambition to leave the farm for life in the city. This is changing today. Increasingly the values inherent in country life are recognized and emphasized.

3. Consolidation of Churches

One of the trends in many rural communities is to follow the example of the public school and consolidate the churches in a given area

into what is known as the "larger parish."¹ In some communities the churches unite entirely and become either denominational or interdenominational federated churches. In other communities each of the churches remains as a unit, but all of them cooperate in certain fields of action. In the former the emphasis is on union; in the latter, on cooperation. It is the latter type that is known as the "larger parish."

Two features usually found in this plan are some type of parish organization, consisting of a council composed of representatives from all the churches cooperating, and often the joint employment of a specialized worker or workers. The worker may be a director of religious education who directs the children's and young people's work in all the churches, a nurse, a personal worker to do visitation evangelism, a director of music, or a general worker often called assistant pastor.

Usually the churches also cooperate in special projects, most of which deal with either children's or young people's work. Of these, vacation church schools rank first, followed by week-day religious education classes on released time. Teacher and leadership training, demonstrations, and personal conferences also rank high.

It is interesting to note that "the greatest demand for church cooperation comes from the young people."² This trend toward greater

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1. The larger parish plan was originated by the Reverend Harlow S. Mills, of Benzonia, Michigan, around 1910. Dr. Malcolm Dana popularized the term "larger parish" around 1920 and advocated the establishment of such parishes especially in New England. "The Reverend Harlow S. Mills' vision for wider service grew out of five convictions. He was convinced that the real object of the church, if it is to fulfill its mission, must be (1) to serve the people, (2) to serve all the people, (3) to serve all the interests of the people, (4) to be responsible for country evangelism, and (5) for the village church to be a 'community' church." --Mark Rich, "The Larger Parish, An Effective Organization for Rural Churches," pp. 3-4.
2. Felton, "Local Church Cooperation in Rural Communities," p. 6.

cooperation, either interdenominationally among all the churches of a community or denominationally among the churches of one denomination, may offer an increasingly satisfactory method of more effective and thorough church work.

4. Emphasis on Stewardship

A new emphasis on stewardship is plainly evident especially as it is related to rural life in the teaching of the stewardship of the earth itself and of its products.

a. "Holy earth" Teaching

Ever since the publication of L. H. Bailey's classic, The Holy Earth, in 1915,¹ there has been much stress laid on that philosophy of rural life that emphasizes the religious and ethical implications of man's relation to the earth. Dr. Bailey's proposition is perhaps best given in the following paragraph from his book:

"If God created the earth, so is the earth hallowed; and if it is hallowed, so must we deal with it devotedly and with care that we do not despoil it, and mindful of our relations to all beings that live on it. We are to consider it religiously: Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."²

An organization which is definitely concerned with man's relationship to the soil is that known as Friends of the Soil, Pinehurst, North Carolina. Two of its purposes are (1) to lead men to regard the earth as holy and to cultivate a reverence toward it as stewards of the Eternal and (2) to strengthen the rural church as the servant of God

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1. L. H. Bailey, The Holy Earth, was reprinted, in cooperation with the author, by The Christian Rural Fellowship, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, in 1943, in a 25-cent edition.
2. Ibid., p. 11.

in its task of bringing redemption to the land and its people.¹ In an announcement of their program they stated the following:

"Wasted lives issue from wasted soil. Today the evidences of wasted soil and wasted souls are scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific. . . . The churches of rural America will fulfill their historic Christian mission when they become the instruments under God whereby souls and soils are redeemed."²

Aaron H. Rapking would make this even stronger by saying that it is impossible for the farmer to have the right conception of God without having the right attitude toward his farm; that a man who robs the soil is as much a robber as one who robs a bank; and that the farmer as a steward of the treasure in the earth will have to give an account of his stewardship.³

The trend to recognize the "holiness" of the earth is a healthy sign if the teaching can be brought to the ordinary farmer and he be educated to this belief. Most farmers perhaps do not realize these implications, and too often teachings such as these are stressed only to agricultural students in certain schools, and they do not have the wide spread they deserve and demand for effect.

b. "Lord's Acre" Plan

With the awakening of Christian leaders and the church to the sanctity of the earth, a new movement in stewardship, the "Lord's Acre" Plan, has been developed.⁴ It is a new movement although the teaching is

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1. See Eugene Smathers, "The Soil is God's Gift," International Journal of Religious Education, February, 1945, pp. 6-7.
2. "Christian Rural Order," Town and Country Church, March, 1944, p. 4.
3. See Rapking, Building the Kingdom of God in the Countryside, p. 46.
4. This movement was started around 1930 by the Reverend Dumont Clarke, director of the religious department of the Farmers Federation, Asheville, North Carolina. Information may be secured from this federation.

as old as the Bible, for it is based on the command to the Israelites: "The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of Jehovah thy God."¹ This practice is spreading rapidly in the United States as well as on mission fields in foreign lands. One of the great values of this plan is the opportunity it presents for enlisting in Christian stewardship all ages in the church and for the training of children and young people in supporting the church and Christian causes. Wherever it has been used it has been found to bring increased spiritual power into the life of the farm and the home. It unites religion with daily life.

This plan may take various forms. Some churches cultivate one acre together and dedicate the proceeds entirely to the cause specified. Some enlist their members in dedicating a definite portion of their earnings or farm products. An office or factory worker may dedicate the first hour's wages on Monday morning and thus transform that first hour and set the tone for the whole week. A housewife may dedicate all her Sunday eggs. A child may dedicate a brood of chickens or a row of potatoes. The possibilities are almost inexhaustible.

The whole movement recognizes the religious implications, for at the beginning of the planting season a service of dedication is held in the church, and at the harvest season a service of thanksgiving is held. Prayer is offered for the workers and the work during the period of growth, and recognition is given as returns are brought in.

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1. Exodus 34:26a.

In a pamphlet published by the Farmers Federation the following values of this plan are brought out:

"When guided prayerfully and managed efficiently, the Lord's Acre Plan:

1. Insures participation of many new church contributors, young and old.
2. Brings supplementary and substantial financial aid for the church program.
3. Unites the Word of God with work for God in daily life on the farm.
4. Trains in Christian stewardship and Christian character.
5. Nurtures spiritual attitude toward soil, stimulates better farming practices.
6. Develops co-operation and fellowship in Christian work.
7. Offers approach to many people outside the Church as an aid to Evangelism.
8. Enables those without ready cash to give through dedicated projects.
9. Multiplies money given to children for chicks or seed to start projects.
10. Gives testimony of working churches through Lord's Acre signs in the fields.
11. Strengthens the spirit of worship by making the Lord's Acre "A Lord's Altar."
12. Helps to train up leaders for a worldwide Christian democracy."¹

The two present-day trends in stewardship could transform the attitude of farm youth toward the country and the church if their enthusiasm would be enlisted.

5. Realization of Necessity for Trained Leaders

Many churches are beginning to see the necessity for training leaders and to recognize this as one of their greatest opportunities of service. Leaders and young people themselves also realize the necessity for training once they catch a vision of the magnitude of the task confronting the church. The program of leadership training is carried on in various ways by different groups. Some churches have summer camps to

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1. "The Lord's Acre Bringing New Life to the Country Church," Religious Department, Farmers Federation, Asheville, North Carolina.

train their leaders. In Memphis, Tennessee, forty-five volunteers teach in the Vacation Bible School. They are given definite training at the same time that they get their practical experience.¹ A pastor, upon discovering that his new charge in New Jersey had trained no ministers or missionaries in fifty years, started sending his young people to conferences and institutes. Now they are going into full-time Christian service.²

The above are three methods used by rural ministers for the training of young people as leaders. Other methods are church nights; workers' conferences; classes in missions, religious education, and stewardship; and others. Whatever the method that is used as the most practical one for the local church, the church which sets out to train leaders will find that many young people are eager to prepare for leadership and not, as is often supposed, wholly uninterested in the church and its work.

6. New Emphasis in the Five Areas of the Christian Education Curriculum

Often it is easier to adopt new ideas of church work in entirely new areas of endeavor than to rethink the work in the old areas and change to more efficient methods there. There is a trend, however, among a number of the larger denominations to do the latter.

a. Worship

In the past not much attention has been given to carefully planned worship services in the average rural church, nor have many conscious efforts been put forth to create atmospheres conducive to

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1. See Felton, Our Temple Hills, p. 141.
2. See Ibid.

worship. But in many quarters there is a new and encouraging attitude toward the worship side of services whether they are the regular Sunday morning worship services or the worship portion of the Sunday School, Christian Endeavor, or other meetings. Fortunately, the "opening exercises," enlivened by the singing of "peppy" and jingly tunes and cluttered with announcements or incidental remarks are giving way to services of a really worshipful nature in some churches. This is encouraging; but since this does not come about by accident, much education is still necessary before most of the country churches will realize the necessity of making the atmosphere conform to the spirit of worship to bear the most fruit.

There is also a trend to make more use of the natural country environment for worship experience. So much of it has been lying latent and unutilized, waiting for the opportunity to be of glory to God and of service to man in the communion between the two.

b. Study

The Sunday School has been a mighty factor in the religious education of the children and young people in the church of the past. Now, however, rural leaders are becoming aware of the alarming spiritual illiteracy of the children and young people who have grown up in the Sunday School and church. They realize more and more that the Sunday School cannot be expected to do in the short space of one hour on one day a week with untrained teachers and poor equipment what occupied the very center of the curriculum and permeated all the instruction among the early settlers of this country. This situation is especially serious in Protestant churches. The following statistics given by Dawber tell

their own sad story:

"For the fifteen million pupils in Protestant Sunday schools, only twenty-four hours of study are provided each year. The Catholic church provides two hundred hours for its eight and one-half million children, and the Jews provide three hundred and thirty-five hours of religious training for their one and one-half million pupils. Meanwhile, the Protestant church has relied too much upon its preaching program and revivalism, and has neglected the more normal avenues to conversion and religious nurture provided by education. . . ."¹

Every Christian father and mother knows the value of religious nurture in the home and religious education in the church; and realizing the alarming situation, they should wholeheartedly support the church and its leaders in the creation of new agencies for the religious instruction of the children and young people.

c. Social and Recreational

In days gone by most of the fellowship and recreation in rural communities grew out of working conditions and perhaps were hardly recognized as such by many because some work was accomplished at the same time that the participants visited and relaxed. These events were usually family and community affairs. But when new means of transportation and improved roads cut distances, and modern conveniences brought more leisure time, the old-time social functions, such as, husking bees, barn-raisings, quilting parties, hay rides, butcherings, and so forth, were replaced with commercial amusements in nearby towns, until today most of the recreation engaged in is commercialized and passive.

The church, seeing the dangers inherent in this tendency as well as in the fact that the young people seek their amusement away from

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1. Dawber, op. cit., p. 111.

home, is beginning to feel its obligation and to advocate and provide recreational opportunities under its auspices. However, there is still much prejudice against the church's entering this area. The trend, nevertheless, is more and more toward the conception of all of life as sacred and the belief that whatever enters the life of the youth is of concern to the church and must be made as helpful as possible. The churches that have provided for their young people in this area of life have found the results very satisfying. In one church in North Carolina it was found that the young people who grew up in the community which provided an adequate social and recreational program alongside the other areas became interested in all the work of the church. All of them accepted Christ as Saviour, and a number of them have gone into the ministry, some to the foreign field, while others are serving at home in the local church.¹ "The church that loves her young people and provides for their every need will be loved by them, and they will find joy in giving their lives in service to the Kingdom."²

d. Personal Christian Living

Since personal Christian living is tied up so closely with some of the other areas and really enters all of them, it is often not treated as a separate item. It is, therefore, hard to determine present trends in this area. On the whole, the church has in the past emphasized its main objective; namely, personal commitment to Christ, and has expected the converts to live subsequently in accordance with their commitment. But often

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1. See Henry W. McLaughlin, The Gospel in Action, p. 118.
2. Ibid., quoting Rev. J. M. Walker, previously quoted in McLaughlin, The Country Church and Public Affairs.

it has not given to its individual members practical help toward the deepening of the spiritual life.

The International Council of Religious Education in its Standard for the Sunday Church School lays much stress on this phase.

"Religious education should lead each pupil into an ever-growing personal faith in God, acceptance of Jesus Christ and his way of life, and membership in the church. Membership and participation in the life and work of the church is not only an expression of loyalty to the cause of Christ but a primary means of growth in Christian living."¹

Some denominational publications for youth groups also emphasize the importance of giving suggestions for personal Christian living. There are some leaders who lay great stress upon the integration of all of life rather than departmentalizing it into the religious and the secular.

Arthur T. Mosher, agricultural missionary to India under the Presbyterian Board, suggests among other phases of the Christian rural program in India "establishing personal and group habits which will conserve, enrich, and develop Christian experience."² His later elaboration of this point is certainly as fitting for groups in the United States as in India:

" . . . Our Christian program must provide for establishing personal and group habits of prayer, study, discussion, and expression which will conserve the teaching given, support a sustained discipleship, and inspire to the discovery of new implications of the Gospel. We are back again to a phase of the Christian program for which pastors and missionaries have long recognized the need. Christian leaders have long realized that listening--to sermons, to expositions of the Gospel, to periodic prayers--is not enough. Religious experience lives by prayer, by worship, by participation, by expression. That is the understanding back of programs to encourage private Bible study and prayer, family devotions, congregational worship, community expression. Probably every pastor and evangelistic missionary has his program for trying to develop these continuing habits. They are indispensable."³

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1. "The International Standard for the Sunday Church School," p. 7.
2. Arthur T. Mosher, "The Kingdom of God and Rural Reconstruction," The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin, No. 56, November, 1940, p. 4.
3. Ibid., p. 8.

e. Service

Youth wants action. And if young people are challenged to worthwhile service in the church, their loyalty to Christ and interest in the church will grow, and their spiritual life will be deepened. During the present war the emphasis has been on service motivated by patriotism, and youth has responded. The church is realizing more and more that it is neglecting a very fruitful field if it does not harness this inclination in youth to respond to what appear worthy challenges and worthwhile tasks to the cause of Christ and his Kingdom. It is harming the young people and crippling the church. Therefore, many churches are providing young people's service projects in the form of youth caravans, service camps, work conferences, and outpost Sunday Schools.¹ All of these are interesting recent developments which are entered into enthusiastically by a host of young people who wonder why the church has not had the vision before. They present great possibilities and deserve exhaustive investigation and trial by all churches.

Protestant groups are often slow in adopting new methods and utilizing contemporary conditions, while the Catholic Church is very much on the alert to use these conditions for the strengthening of its program. Witness the following statements from a 1939 Catholic publication:

"That there is definite need for an organized youth program under Catholic auspices at this time, none can deny. Neither can we ignore the challenge by refusing to participate in the development of this project. It is a magnificent chance to translate Catholic Action into Action, and no greater opportunity for service has ever come to us.

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1. Some of these are discussed in detail in Chapter III under Services. See post, pp. 130-131.

We need but glance around us to learn that youth is being organized for every phase of activity. Various forces, many of which are obviously detrimental to faith and morals, are very active along these lines, and in many fields youth associations are multiplying rapidly. If we do not organize Catholic youth under the protecting arm of the Church, then other agencies will do it for us. Witness the tragedies following in the wake of Communism. Sordid literature, vicious amusements, countless counter-attractions, irresponsible leaders--these continually beckon to youth and consequently, self preservation requires more concerted action on our part. . . ."¹

It behooves the Protestant churches of the land to develop this area of service for which youth is waiting and which it will find in other less desirable movements if the church does not provide it. The church should do this, not from the motive of self-preservation alone, as is suggested in the above quotation, but for the sake of the young people--to save their souls and their "lives."

F. Summary

The discussion of this chapter has dealt with the rural church --its importance, problems, advantages, and present trends--especially as it concerns the youth of the church. It was seen that the church is important to the young people themselves as a laboratory in which they can experiment in Christian living and as the agency which alone can provide a worthy motive for life and which can lead to the salvation of the souls and the lives of these young people.

It was also seen that the church is important to the home as it works hand in hand with this unit which is recognized as the foundation and cornerstone of all society. The church must provide the inspiration,

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1. Manifesto on Rural Life, pp. 106-107, quoting the C.Y.O. (Catholic Youth Organization) Manual, Diocese of Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

create sentiments, and give practical help to the Christian home if both are to fulfill their God-given functions. More than that, from the church should radiate powerful influences into all areas of the community life. Thus it should establish itself as the most important factor in the community as well as the home, around which life revolves.

The importance of the rural church to the city, nation, and the world was also recognized from the fact that it almost exclusively provides the population growth of the nation, and many of its sons and daughters find places of service in foreign fields in secular or religious vocations.

Some of the problems of the rural church that were dealt with were isolation and distance, lack of education and adequate leadership, lack of rural-centered materials and adequate equipment, increasing secularization, and some undesirable attitudes of rural people. Many rural churches are not aware of these problems; and to overcome them, they must be recognized and tackled. This must be done by the men and women who constitute the church.

It was also found that the rural church possesses certain advantages that must be preserved and utilized. These are the solidarity of the group and the advantages inherent in rural life--its closeness to nature and to the family, its resources for character formation, its conduciveness to the fostering of close personal relationships, and its provision for physical freedom.

Some of the present trends in the youth work of the rural church that were noted were an increasing awareness of rural youth and its problems, a recognition of values inherent in country life, the tendency to

consolidate churches into "larger parishes," a new emphasis on the stewardship of the earth in the teaching that the earth is holy and the popularizing of the "Lord's Acre" plan, a realization of the necessity for trained leaders, and a new emphasis in the five areas of the Christian education curriculum--worship, study, the social and recreational, personal Christian living, and service.

In order to be effective and productive in its mission, the rural church must meet the needs of rural youth--all rural youth, boys and girls, younger youth and older youth. It must meet all the needs of rural youth; it should be as inclusive as the interests and activities and needs of youth. It should meet the needs, not merely attract youth by its activities. The activities should be only the means to an end--that of personal salvation and enlistment in the cause of Christ--and never ends in themselves. God must be at the center of the program, and all activities must revolve around this Center and be permeated by him.

CHAPTER II

THE WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE MENNONITE CHURCHES
AND THEIR YOUNG PEOPLE

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A. Introduction

Mennonites are a rural people; especially is this true of those living in the Western District where ninety per cent of the General Conference Mennonite churches are located in the country or the small town.¹ Ideally, the Christian church is the center of the rural community, and from it should radiate a dynamic influence into the hearts and lives of the people. J. Winfield Fretz says in regard to the Mennonite Church as the center of the community:

"Among Mennonites this has traditionally been the pattern of community organization. When new communities were started one of the very first buildings erected was a church building, or perhaps a school house which served a double purpose as meeting house and educational center. In the new community the early settlers sought to locate as close to church and school buildings as possible. As the community grew, settlement was pushed farther and farther out on the fringes of the local parish. In time a second meeting house was erected. It gradually became the center of a new community social and religious life, and the growing process was demonstrated all over again."²

What are some of the trends that affect the Mennonite Church today? Fretz mentions three trends that are noticeable among rural churches--the rapid decline of the rural church, the drift from the open country to the village, and the giving way of the old Protestant groups to newer and aggressive groups.³ The Mennonite Church is not affected by the first

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1. See footnote 2, ante, p. 3.
2. J. Winfield Fretz, "Mennonites and Rural Life," The Mennonite, Jan. 11, 1944, p. 7.
3. Ibid., March 21, 1944, p. 2

trend; for, according to the Federal Religious Census and Mennonite year books, the Mennonite rural churches are "more than holding their own; they are actually increasing in number and in membership."¹ There are indications, however, that the Mennonites are affected by the second trend; namely, that they are following the drift cityward. The third also has an effect, for there are evidences of inroads made by the newer evangelical sects in the Mennonite Church. Because these and other trends affect the Mennonite Church of the future since they affect the youth of today, it is well to try to discover the status of the young people's work in these churches at the present.

This chapter, therefore, proposes to investigate the extent and scope of the young people's program of the General Conference Mennonite churches of the Western District. The information is derived largely from the questionnaires sent to the pastors of the sixty churches studied, forty-nine of which were returned;² from results of discussion programs held by five young people's groups; from personal contact of the writer; and from reports appearing in The Mennonite, the official organ of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, and in the Western District Tidings, the quarterly young people's periodical of the district.

1. Location and Distribution of the Mennonite Population in the District

With reference to the Mennonite population distribution in the Western District the churches naturally fall into two classes--those located in more or less solid centers and those in isolated communities.

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1. Ibid.

2. Most of the 11 that were not returned were from small outlying churches.

a. Solid Centers

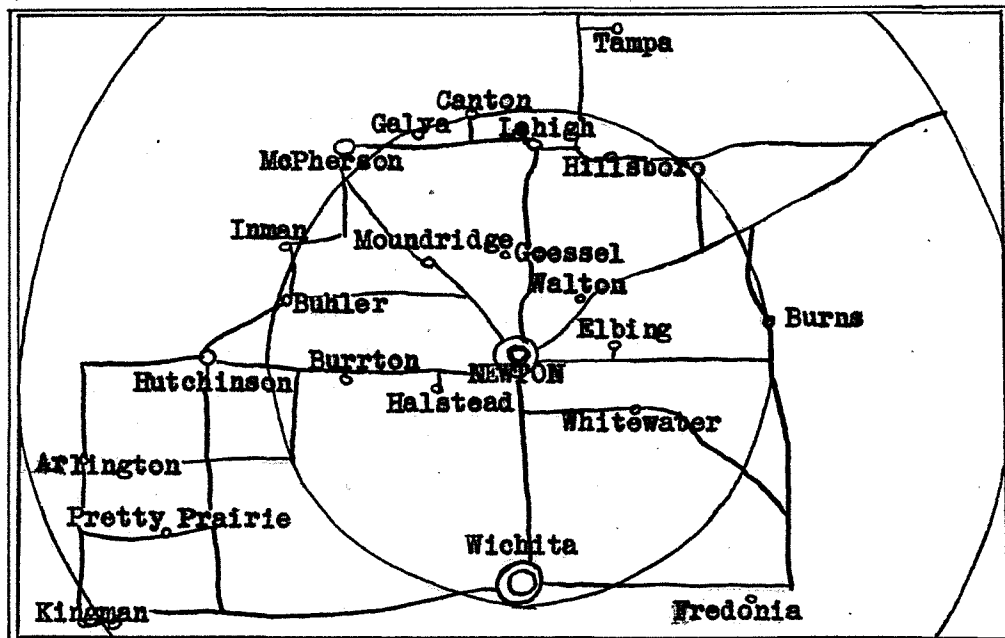
The sixty churches of the Western District, which includes over one-third of all the General Conference Mennonite churches in the United States, claim a membership of over twelve thousand, plus around four thousand children below the age of fourteen who are not yet church members.¹ Newton, Kansas, is the population center of the district as well as of the General Conference and has, therefore, been designated as the headquarters. As can be seen from the accompanying map and the list of churches with their membership as taken from the 1945 Yearbook, the preponderance of the Mennonite population is found in the half-circle circumscribed by a thirty-mile radius west, north, and east of Newton, with the heaviest settlement in the west half of the area. Twenty-four of the sixty churches, comprising a membership of over 7000, plus more than 2000 children, are found within a thirty-mile radius of Newton. Thirty-two churches with a membership of over 8500 and almost 3000 children are within the sixty-mile radius shown on the map.

In some sections around Moundridge, Goessel, and Hillsboro Mennonites live in virtually solid communities. In many of these communities there are no churches of other denominations, and most of the high school students in the high schools are Mennonite. In Oklahoma and Nebraska there are areas similar to this. Due to their distinctive doctrine of non-resistance they have often been persecuted in the European countries, which resulted in a number of mass migrations.

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1. These figures are based on statistics found in the "Year Book of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America," 1945.

MAP OF MENNONITE CHURCHES AROUND NEWTON¹
and
LIST OF CHURCHES IN WESTERN DISTRICT²



Alexanderwohl, Goessel	911	Gnadenberg, Newton	134
Arlington, Arlington	84	Goessel, Goessel	280
Bergtal, Pawnee Rock	180	Grace, Enid, Oklahoma	50
Bergtal, Corn, Oklahoma	123	Gruenfeld, Fort Cobb, Okla.	67
Bethany, McPherson	209	Hebron, Buhler	238
Bethel College, N. Newton	440	Herald, Bessie, Oklahoma	166
Bethel, Hydro, Oklahoma	68	Hillsboro, Hillsboro	335
Bethel, Perryton, Texas	25	Hoffnungsaus, Inman	390
Brudertal, Hillsboro	195	Hoffnungsaus, Cuauhtemoc, Chih, Mexico	25
Buhler, Buhler	329	Hopefield, Moundridge	116
Burrton, Burrton	85	Inman, Inman	209
Deer Creek, Deer Creek, Okla.	21	Johannestal, Hillsboro	202
Ebenzer, Gotebo, Okla.	85	Kidron, Cordell, Okla.	26
Ebenfeld, Plains	19	Lehigh, Lehigh	246
Eden, Inola, Oklahoma	133	Lorraine Ave., Wichita	192
Eden, Moundridge,	797	Meadow, Colby	22
Einsiedel, Hanston	75	Medford, Medford, Okla.	128
Emmanuel, Moundridge	108	New Friedensburg, Vona, Colo.	25
Emmaus, Whitewater	339	New Hopedale, Meno, Okla.	350
First, Beatrice, Neb.	335	Pleasant Valley, Plains	47
First, Burns	30	Saron, Orienta, Okla.	75
First Christian, Moundridge	340	Second, Beatrice, Neb.	171
First Garden, Halstead	177	Sichar, Cordell, Okla.	87
First, Geary, Oklahoma	96	Swiss, Whitewater,	123
First, Halstead	303	Tabor, Newton	399
First, Hutchinson	129	Walton, Walton	71
First, Newton	620	West Zion, Moundridge	298
First, Pretty Prairie	565	Zion, Elbing	115
First, Ransom	100	Zion, Kingman	76
Friedensfeld, Turpin, Okla.	73	Zoar, Goltry, Oklahoma	273
Friedenstal, Tampa	112		

1. Based on map in The Mennonite, May 22, 1945, p. 4.

2. See "Year Book of the General Conference, 1945" p. 44.

This accounts for the solid settlements in many areas. When they migrated, they sought the unsettled areas where they would be unmolested and where they could establish their church communities and have complete control of the teaching of their children in the public schools. This, no doubt, has been the greatest factor in the preservation of Mennonite principles; for these have been preserved to a greater degree in the solid areas than in the areas where small groups of Mennonites live in isolation from the mainstream.

b. Isolated Communities

As the fringe of the solid Mennonite communities was pushed as far as possible and land was no longer available in the Mennonite settlements, young married couples and tenants unable to buy land in the settled areas went into areas where there still was cheap land available. This is the reason for the small outpost Mennonite churches. Most of them are supported by the Home Mission Committee of the Western District Conference, and some of them have no resident minister. It can be said to their credit that, in spite of a lack of leadership, they hold regular Sunday School sessions, and worship services whenever the Committee finds it possible to send a visiting minister.

Quite different from these outposts, and yet similar in a way, are the few churches located in cities of more than 2500 inhabitants, with one or two exceptions.¹ Most of these were started under the auspices of the Home Mission Committee to serve the Mennonites who had moved to these cities to live and/or to work.

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1. These churches are located in Hutchinson, McPherson, and Wichita, Kansas, and Enid, Oklahoma.

2. Number of Young People in the District

Estimating the number of young people from the returns on the questionnaires that came in, the approximate number for whom the Western District Conference churches are responsible is around 3400. Many of these are away from the home community, either in military or Civilian Public Service, in school, or at work. In some churches the number away is as high as seventy and sixty per cent; in others, less than ten per cent. The smaller proportions are usually found in the churches located in the strictly farming communities where many of the boys have been deferred because of essential work on the farm.

It is the host of young people plus the four thousand children below thirteen that present the challenge to the General Conference Mennonite churches of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Southern Nebraska in particular. What are the churches doing to meet that challenge and provide an adequate program that will meet the needs of these young people and effect the well-balanced development of the fourfold growth of the individual-- physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual?

B. Survey of the Young People's Work

Because of the congregational form of government of the Mennonite churches, this study deals more with individual churches than with the Conference as a whole, although Conference and district activities will be touched upon. Some churches are more active and provide more areas of activity for their young people than others; but, in general, the same pattern of church activity is discovered, a traditional pattern followed in the mother church and very naturally adopted by the daughter churches

as they were established. This pattern, with slight variations, consists of a one-hour Sunday School period on Sunday morning with a ten or fifteen-minute opening session and a five or ten-minute closing session, the rest of the time being given to the classes for discussion. This is followed by the worship service of forty-five minutes or an hour. A General Christian Endeavor (called Senior Christian Endeavor in some churches), composed of all ages and in some churches attended almost as faithfully as the morning service, has its meeting once a month or every two weeks, this often being the only Sunday evening service except for special meetings. Some add to this a Sunday night or mid-week Bible class and choir practice and one or more graded Christian Endeavor groups, which usually alternate with the General Christian Endeavor.

1. Work in the Five Areas of the Christian Education Curriculum

What are the Mennonite churches doing in the five areas of worship, study, social and recreational, personal Christian living, and service, which are stressed much by the International Council of Religious Education?

a. Worship

Even though worship experience enters into other areas of activity besides the regular worship services of the church, the discussion here will be restricted to the latter.

(1) Sunday Morning Worship Service

The Mennonite churches as such have thus far not had to cope with the problem of how to get the young people to come to the Sunday morning services. In most communities it is still the tradition that the family attend church on Sunday morning unless sickness or bad weather and roads make it impossible. Whether most or even half of them really attend church

for the worship experience is a question. Certainly there are many who do, but it is feared that many others merely go from tradition and habit and for the social contact it affords.

In some churches the service is not conducive to a real worship experience because of such factors as atmosphere, order of service, disturbances, and others. Because of the simplicity of most Mennonite churches the atmosphere of worship must be created through other means than stained glass windows and soft organ music. This can be done; and if it is done effectively, it is of more value to the worshiper since it is more apt to carry over into everyday life than the atmosphere which is dependent upon outward things. The tragedy is that such an atmosphere is seldom discovered in rural Mennonite churches nor other non-liturgical country churches. This can perhaps be attributed largely to an unawareness of this lack on the part of the leaders.

The young people who have been away to school or to work are becoming increasingly aware of the difference in atmosphere in the home church and churches in the city and are beginning to voice their dissatisfaction. They perhaps are in danger of swinging to the opposite extreme and clamoring for the elaborate and ritualistic.

An idea as to how some of the young people themselves feel about the worship services can be discovered from the returns on the discussions held by young people's groups in five of the churches. These should not be taken as the general consensus since they represent only a few groups. In answer to the question: Is the Sunday morning worship service characterized by an atmosphere of quiet and reverence? one group concluded: "It is improved over what it used to be; not so much visiting between

Sunday School and church, . . . systematic order of worship, good music."

Another group says:

"We feel that our church could improve on being quiet, but as a whole the general attitude is quite reverent. Less conversation and visiting on the part of the people before services would help to create a quiet atmosphere. Well prepared and ably presented sermons help greatly to keep the quiet attention of the people. In our particular church we have very little disturbance from the outside, such as noisy traffic, etc. The general environment is good, although it certainly is nothing elaborate. The music as a whole is good and the order of service is also good, although it could be a bit less informal at times."

The young people of another group feel that some of the things that could be improved are less visiting, more care in placing hymnbooks into racks, keeping the sanctuary only for worship and not using it for choir practices and discussions. Since theirs is an older structure, they come again and again to the point of how helpful a new building and a choir loft and pipe organ would be. Other disturbances mentioned by this group are the crying of babies and entrance of late-comers.

The first group recognizes the difference a systematic order of service and good music make in creating a worshipful atmosphere. All of them recognize the fact that environment does help or hinder. The reference in the discussion of the second group, who are from a recently remodeled church which is beautiful in its simplicity, perhaps need not be interpreted to mean that they feel the church should be more elaborate, although there is the danger of emphasizing the elaborate in swinging away from the simple.

In reference to the disturbances caused by late-comers and crying babies be it said that there is no excuse for the former. Crying babies, if kept in the nursery in the rear, need not disturb any one but the mothers. Some disciples of the present day would turn them away as did those of

Jesus's day, but his words ring through the church edifices, simple or elaborate, of this day: "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God."¹

To the credit of the third group be it said that they evidence a very constructive attitude; for in spite of the criticisms they have and the lacks they see and the desire for a new church building, they continually come back to such questions as: "Is the new church what makes the difference in reverence? . . . What do we revere, the church or God?" And they conclude "that it isn't the outside traffic or inside disturbances that bother too much if we are interested in what is being said."

(2) Sunday Evening Worship Service²

According to information derived from the forty-nine questionnaires twelve churches have Sunday evening worship services every Sunday; two, three Sundays a month; seven, every two weeks; four, once a month; eighteen, occasionally; one, never; and five did not report. These services are explicitly designed for the young people every Sunday in six churches and to some extent in two more; every two weeks in two; once a month in two; occasionally in twenty-one; and never in five. The methods by which the young people share most frequently are by rendering special music, singing in the choir, and in several churches reading the Scripture lesson occasionally. Twelve pastors report that the young people plan and conduct the entire service occasionally, the number of times ranging from once or twice a year to once or twice a month. Other methods

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1. Mark 10:14b.
2. This was not to include Christian Endeavor as specifically stated in the questionnaire; but this seems to have been overlooked in some cases thus reducing the accuracy of this report.

of sharing used by some young people are the sponsoring of sacred concerts, visiting ministers, the showing of films, and the sponsoring of mission programs.

The young people of a church with evening services every Sunday feel that the attendance is not what it ought to be and that the meetings are not as effective as they might be. Another group, in whose church evening meetings are held twice a month (probably Christian Endeavor), feels that it "would not be practical for a rural church to have meetings every Sunday evening," although they recognize the value for individual spiritual strengthening of more services.

b. Study

The three areas of activity dealt with under study are the Sunday School, Christian Endeavor, and midweek service. Some of these areas cannot be classified strictly under study since they also enter into other fields. Vacation church schools, weekday Bible classes, extended sessions, and so forth, would ordinarily find a place here; but very little, if anything, is done for Mennonite youth in these fields. Many of the churches have Vacation Bible Schools, but only for children in the first eight grades; weekday Bible schools on released time are found only in a few of the cities, and again mostly for the younger age group. Many of the young people, however, have the opportunity of taking Bible courses as regular high school subjects or as extra-curricular activities in some high schools. The former is true in the public high schools located in solid Mennonite communities, for the state will accept one unit of Bible toward the requirement for graduation. The young people who are enrolled in the church academies--Mennonite Bible Academy

at North Newton, Kansas, and the Oklahoma Bible Academy at Meno, Oklahoma --have the added privilege of receiving Bible training while getting a high school education and also receiving instruction in the principles and doctrines of the church.

(1) Sunday School

Henry W. McLaughlin quotes the following statement made by Dr. Albert H. Gage in a chapter entitled, "Discovering Leaks and Stopping Them," which deals with church schools:

"From a wide study of many schools, it appears that most of the leaks in the church school are caused by: (1) the teacher problem; (2) lack of Christian spirit; (3) poor organization; (4) crowded conditions; (5) failure to win the pupil to Christ and build him into the life of the church."¹

If Mennonite Sunday Schools should examine themselves for evidences of these "leaks," one or the other or all of them might be found in the Sunday Schools studied. Is the accusation true which J. S. Schultz brought before the readers of The Mennonite when he quoted a Sunday School teacher who wrote: "It is, of course, true that most of the time we are just playing at church and Sunday school work in comparison to our secular work"²

Nine of the churches studied are realizing the need for teachers' training and are providing short and concentrated courses of one or several weeks or weekly lessons over a longer period of time, or they are taking advantage of such courses offered in the community. It seems, however, as if few of the teachers realize their need, for the number availing themselves of this training is exceedingly small. This is a tragedy, as Schultz says:

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1. McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 103.
2. J. S. Schultz, "Sunday School--Work or Play?" The Mennonite, Jan. 16, 1945, p. 4.

"We voice long and loud accusations against the public schools for giving us so little time with our children to teach religion and otherwise inculcate spiritual values into them, and there is ground for that. But until we really make better use of the time and opportunities we have in week-day religious education, summer vacation Bible schools, and especially in our Sunday Schools, we can hardly complain about our very limited results.

"Would a banker, a grocer, or a farmer be willing to turn his organization over to one who had no other qualification for managing it for him than that of great interest in such work? For public school teaching it took centuries until effective teacher preparation became a requirement for accepting such a position, but in the last century only rarely have young men or women been given the responsibility of teaching unless they had a reasonable understanding of boys and girls to be taught and of subject matter to be studied. Is there any excuse for making no concerted effort in that direction if we really believe that we Sunday School teachers and superintendents have a God-given mission to perform, a responsibility for immortal souls of children and those older?"¹

A few churches report regular teachers' meetings at which the lesson for the coming Sunday is discussed and teaching helps are given. For the most part meetings like these are of only comparatively little value.

The following are some of the statistics gathered from the questionnaire about the status of Mennonite Sunday Schools: Almost half of the churches (21) report between ninety and a hundred per cent attendance of the young people of the church. The rest, with the exception of one, report approximately seventy-five per cent. As to Sunday School procedure it was found that all of the Sunday Schools have opening services from ten to twenty minutes in length. These, instead of being real worship services, it is feared may in many churches be only "opening exercises" which all too often are of little value except to late-comers. All except three report a closing service, ranging from five to fifteen

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1. Ibid.

minutes, which has one advantage, that of providing an opportunity for the classes to reassemble in the sanctuary and be ready for the worship service which follows in most cases with no interruption, for the children remain for the service in most of the churches.

Farmers and housewives make up the bulk of the teachers, which is as it should be in a rural church, if they are truly devoted to the task and are qualified to teach. Business men, grade school teachers, and ministers also rank high. Educationally, the average enjoy high school and some college training with smaller numbers in the upper and lower brackets.¹

The choice of the teacher is left to the young people's classes themselves in practically all of the churches. Where this is not made from a list of nominees approved by a Sunday School committee, it may lead to the selection of someone who is popular but who is not qualified to teach.

Some of the young people are aware of the lack of qualification, for one of the groups brought out in its discussion that sometimes the lessons are not related closely enough to life. Another group said that the Sunday School is not as meaningful as it could be--mostly due to a lack of preparation on the part of the students and some on the part of the teacher. The latter group realizes the importance of the teacher when they state, "The class discussion depends a lot on the teacher to bring out the right points; very often he lets the subject drift to

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1. Due to the fact that many ministers in listing the number of teachers listed all of them rather than only those of young people's classes, as called for, the statistics may not be accurate.

other topics." A third group feels that the discussions fail "to reach the heart of the lesson, that the questions only cover the surface."

The question is in order: Is there any excuse for not putting forth strenuous efforts to secure the best and most effective Sunday School teaching which will result in transformed lives? Dr. Schultz wonders whether the following qualifications for teachers and superintendents would be agreeable to the churches and conferences to begin with:

"1. Being an active Christian. 2. Having a working knowledge and understanding of the Bible. 3. Having had some experience of working successfully with children or young people. 4. Having an acceptable amount of schooling."¹

In other words, the qualifications should be: Knowing God, the subject matter, the child, and the method.

The Sunday Schools of the Western District are organized into a Convention which meets annually but apparently gives little, if any, practical help the rest of the time and sometimes not even at its meeting. Could this be made to function in a practical way?

(2) Christian Endeavor

The Christian Endeavor societies of the Western District in general are the most active groups in the district. The strength and activity of many of them can probably be attributed to the strong and very active district organization in the Western District Christian Endeavor Convention. This meets once a year, usually the last week-end in July or the first one in August. This meeting is of inspirational as well as practical help. The practical help is found especially in discussion groups and the choice of various projects which are then

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1. Schultz, loc. cit.

unitedly carried out through the various societies. The projects selected at the 1944 Convention include the raising of \$500 for each of four projects: Civilian Public Service; the establishment of a scholarship fund at Bethel College for young people of other racial groups; the new mission field in South America; and the training of Chinese students to carry on the mission work of the Conference in China as soon as possible. It was also resolved to "support the Conference in its plans to rehabilitate returning men, and when definite plans are made, we will support them financially."¹ Funds coming in beyond the amounts specified above were designated for post-war relief. The local societies then choose some or all of these projects and often a few others besides.

The Christian Endeavor Convention is also responsible to a large degree for the annual Western District Young People's Retreat; for the members of the Retreat Committee are elected by the Convention except those who serve in an advisory capacity--the president of the Western District Conference, a member of the Committee on Education, and the district young people's representative to the Young People's Union of the General Conference²--who belong to this committee by virtue of their offices.

This Convention also puts out a quarterly paper called the Western District Tidings, which keeps the societies and individual members informed on activities and plans and progress. This is often supplemented by a mimeographed C. E. Newsletter if the need arises.

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1. "Resolutions Adopted at the Convention," The Mennonite, Aug. 8, 1944, p. 10.
2. The young people's representative, though not specifically elected to the Retreat Committee, is also elected by this Convention.

The Christian Endeavor Convention is the organ through which the Young People's Union works in this district; and, as such, it encourages local societies to judge their effectiveness by the Standards worked out by the Union.¹

As was seen above, most of the churches in the Western District Conference have at least one Christian Endeavor group, usually a General or Senior Christian Endeavor. Some have, in addition, one or two graded groups which alternate with the above. Two churches, the Second Mennonite Church of Beatrice, Nebraska, and the Bethel College Church of North Newton, Kansas, report four different age groups, strictly graded; but this is very unusual for Mennonite churches.²

On the average the attendance is good. Most of the pastors report that from fifty to seventy-five per cent of the young people attend the society most nearly planned for the ages thirteen to twenty-five. The percentage of attendance of this group at other Christian Endeavor meetings is reported very high by some while others indicate that it is negligible.

The types of programs used most frequently are topical, musical, and special speakers. Many report a mixture of the suggested types. Only one reports an outdoor meeting; but there are others that have had them according to The Mennonite.

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1. For copy of "A Program of Standards for Mennonite Young People's Society," see Appendix, p.165.
2. Sixteen churches report having Junior Christian Endeavor groups; five, Intermediate; and nineteen, Young People's; the last two perhaps being synonymous in most cases; nine, Senior and 27, General, these perhaps being synonymous also. There are one College and one Community Christian Endeavor. The latter meets once a month in the Meadow Mennonite Church at Colby, Kansas, with five or six other denominations joining with them. (Others might find this suggestive.)

The young people from one church report that the "C. E. is neither as meaningful nor as interesting as it could be." This they feel can be attributed to a lack of variety in the programs. Another group finds the same thing but concludes that they can help to remedy the condition by becoming more active. A third group feels that this same weakness can be remedied by giving more of the members an opportunity to take part, these, in turn, accepting their part "willingly and prayerfully." Another group feels that, if their space and time were not so limited, they could spend all evening on the program and a social hour following.

(3) Midweek service

The midweek service does not find the place in most of the churches that it might have. Thirty-five churches report having such a service,¹ but only eight have a division for young people, which in some cases includes children. Some that have special divisions for young people report excellent attendance; but as a whole the attendance is very low, nineteen of the thirty-five reporting less than fifty per cent of young people attending, some less than twenty-five per cent.

The young people of one of the churches report the following:

"Our young people's midweek Bible class was always well attended when the weather permitted. Our discussions were very much related to life and most of the young people seemed very willing to take part in the discussions. One of the criticisms might be that we have no definite lesson assigned and thus there is lack of preparation on the part of the class."

Another group expressed the desire for having "a church night" during the week with something for all ages.

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1. Six of the churches have midweek services throughout the year; sixteen, during the winter months; six, at intervals; and seven, at special seasons.

c. Social and Recreational

"How we pray is affected by what we play,"¹ is a fact most Christian leaders are aware of. Their awareness extends at least to the raising of their voices against the evils of many types of commercial amusements, but often it stops there. There is still much prejudice in many churches against providing a regular social and recreational program for the children and young people or the whole family. There may be several reasons for this; namely, the original view of recreation as a waste of time or, in regard to physical exercise, a waste of effort that might be used to good advantage on the farm; the fear that the recreation may become the most important thing to the young people, causing the church to lose its sense of mission; or the feeling that it is too secular an area for the church to engage in. Today many churches, and among them some Mennonite churches, are coming to realize that no area of life is secular but that all of life is sacred and that the church must be concerned with anything that enters into the life of its members.

According to the reports of the pastors church-sponsored social functions in about half of the churches consist of one or two Christian Endeavor socials annually, a very few having these socials monthly or bi-monthly; a few Sunday School classes having monthly or fewer class meetings; and about two-thirds of the Sunday Schools having annual picnics. A number of churches have church-sponsored young people's parties; and fourteen report church fellowship suppers, a few as often as four times a year, but most of them once a year. Several report choir socials,

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1. Roadman, op. cit., p. 103.

roller skating parties, and so forth. The young people of the Tabor and Alexanderwohl churches in the Goessel, Kansas, community have socials whenever a member comes home on furlough from C. P. S. camp, as reported in The Mennonite. The young people of the three churches from this community, the two mentioned above and the Goessel Church, at times plan activities together. Sometimes they have their Christian Endeavor meetings together; and one summer they met at several different homes for games on Sundays when there was no evening meeting in church. These were enjoyed by some, while others felt the group was too large to be effective.

The two churches of Beatrice, Nebraska, unite in a Peace Fellowship which started as a study group interested in the peace testimony of the church but which has rapidly spread into other areas of service. Their bi-weekly meetings provide opportunities for social contacts as well as service.¹ Recently they report an attendance of 83. Where the social can be combined with service, as in this case, a double value is realized and the effect tends to integrate the various areas of life.

Another venture is made by the First Mennonite Church of Beatrice. The pastor reports that "a social committee has been working with the idea of arranging for a workshop with woodworking equipment, basket and rug weaving facilities."

Often when the social and recreational program is mentioned, the mistake is made of thinking of elaborately planned functions or thoroughly equipped social halls and the more spontaneous types of recreation

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1. Reported by Elbert Koontz, pastor of the Second Mennonite Church, Beatrice, Nebraska, and also mentioned by Walter H. Dyck, pastor of the First Mennonite Church there. This will be discussed more fully under Service.

are overlooked. Many churches who realize the need complain that they do not have the facilities nor the money to supply them. They fail to recognize facilities they already have or have access to, such as, a large lawn, large basement, and nearby picnic grounds. Many of the churches report having one, two, or all three of these. Some are located close to a public school ground where basket ball courts and baseball diamonds are open to use if the church or individuals furnish the balls and bat.

Although the homes play some part in the social and recreational phase, it is not as large a part as it should be.

In some parishes the pastor's home is open to the young people for occasional parties. Once a year the pastor of the First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas, invites all the young people of the church to the "Country Manse" for a social evening of games, a short devotional period, and refreshments. Before the war as many as 150 attended these gatherings.

The Mennonite and the Western District Tidings frequently carry short reports on social and recreational activities of the young people's groups of various churches. An interesting activity which combined recreation and service was that of the Intermediate group of the Bethel College Church, which sponsored a young people's work night for the planting of trees and shrubs on the Mennonite Bible Academy grounds.¹ Other groups would find pleasure in similar parties for the beautifying of their church grounds, and the pleasure would continue as the result of their work would become increasingly evident.

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1. "What's Happening Here and There," Western District Tidings, June, 1944, p. 7.

Another report of interest is the following:

"The Walton Mennonite Christian Endeavor Society had a special program Sunday evening, May 13. The program committee arranged for a 'Playnight' in which old and young took part in wholesome recreation. The little children enjoyed playing outside. Others played ping-pong and the older folks tested their wits on checkers and monopoly and other wholesome games. At 10:00 o'clock, the ladies of the Mission Society served refreshments of cocoa, sandwiches, and cookies. A wholesome Christian fellowship was enjoyed by all."¹

The Mission Society of this same church featured a mission program at the home of one of its members on a Sunday evening the summer of 1944. A social hour was part of the evening.²

The Halstead Christian Endeavor had a unique meeting; excellent for a rural group, on October 15, 1944.

". . . The society met at 4:00 to go to Mr. C. A. Smith's home for a nature meeting. A short devotional period was first held under Mr. Smith's beautiful red oak tree. . . . The remainder of the meeting was spent in an interesting study of the many different trees in Mr. Smith's yard. . . . The group then went back to the church where they enjoyed a sack lunch together."³

Another group making use of the out-of-doors and their own church park was the Intermediate Christian Endeavor of the Tabor Church, July 2, 1944. "Rev. H. B. Schmidt reported on his visit to a C. P. S. camp. The group also enjoyed an hour of playing 'Tennessee' and visiting. After this they met in the church auditorium where Orie Lehrman showed slides of C. P. S. life."⁴

Commercial amusements, which often neither amuse nor re-create, are also making their inroads into Mennonite circles. Some pastors

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1. "Youth Jottings," The Mennonite, May 22, 1945, p. 10.
2. "Jottings," The Mennonite, August 22, 1944, p. 15.
3. "Youth Jottings," The Mennonite, November 14, 1944, p. 12.
4. Ibid., August 15, 1944, p. 10.

report as many as 95 per cent of their young people attending the movies. This is the unusual; also it is no indication of frequency of attendance. Dancing is very infrequent according to the reports. A few report from ninety to one hundred per cent of the young people roller skating, some groups sponsoring occasional roller skating parties. Although this is a harmless and enjoyable sport, its disadvantages are that in most places it must be done at the public rink because there are no other facilities, and; therefore, the associates cannot always be a picked group, nor can the atmosphere be controlled, especially in larger places. Can the church afford only to preach against participation in commercial amusements but fail to substitute anything in their place?

Because of the more or less meager program of the churches there is little competition possible of other activities with the young people's activities of the church. A few report competition of young people's activities with public school functions. This could be avoided if all community organizations would get together to make out a calendar, each organization getting reservations on certain nights of the week for its activities. This makes for cooperation between community organizations and the church.

Some of the young people's discussion groups report a need for more social life; and the suggestions made in this connection are of a type that would include the whole family. This is a healthy indication; and since there are so many tendencies to separate families, the church's obligation is to do what it can to foster family solidarity through its total program.

The discussion of one group brought out these two thoughts: "If young people go outside the church to gain social activity, they lose interest in the church," and "to grow spiritually we need Christian companions."

In the report of another group the beginning of an unhealthy symptom was detected. Because of complaints of having recreation at the church, the young people seem to feel that they must seek their amusement elsewhere and so place a premium on discovering a place which they enjoy and which is out of the church. Regardless of how clean and wholesome the place and the recreation is, the above is not a wholesome tendency. It is highly commendable if churches cooperate with community groups in the matter of recreation when there is some provision for the type that is worthy of support, but the church must not be guilty of recommending such programs just because they are out of the church. This makes for disintegration between the various areas of life, all of which should be considered sacred.

Boy-girl relationships also present a problem in many Mennonite communities. One pastor, in fact, considers the hesitancy of couples to come to church together and their tendency to go to the movies instead as one of his greatest problems as far as young people are concerned. One group of young people gives as the reason for this tendency that it causes so much talk among their elders, who immediately consider their relationship highly significant. Another group feels that this behavior is the customary behavior and no one wants to change this custom. On the whole, expressions indicate that the young people themselves feel that this should be changed. It makes for abnormal boy-girl relationships.

when older people do not consider friendships between those of the two sexes as the natural thing except as preliminary to marriage. This has its effect on the young people and robs them of many rich friendships or distorts the relationship between members of the two sexes. Where this tendency exists, couples hesitate to appear together in public or to make the home the place of fellowship; for they fear the misinterpretation of their relationship by their elders when they are merely good friends. Says one young people's group: "This is one place we feel where the church could help our young people." Other groups have voiced the same opinion.

It is not the fault of the younger generation that there are many social and recreational problems today which did not exist in the past. Changing conditions and new methods have brought many of these with them. Merely to lament the passing of the "good old days" is not enough; the Mennonite Church must be ready to meet the new day with its problems, or it will awaken one day to find that there are no problems because there are no young people.

d. Personal Christian Living

The area of the curriculum termed Personal Christian Living is seldom considered separately since it is closely intertwined with the other four areas and can hardly be separated from them. However, special emphasis must be laid on this phase; for Christianity is, after all, a personal and individual matter. The church fails to fulfill its mission, regardless of how apparently successful the social gospel may be, if it fails to emphasize the individual and his personal relationship to Christ. This it ought to have done and not to have left the other undone.

The three factors which the pastors feel contribute most noticeably to the growth of the Christian life of the young people are the Sunday morning worship service, family devotions, and group Bible study, in order. The other possible choices given, all of which ranked very close in the following order, were pastoral counseling, personal devotions, choir practice, and reading of good literature.

The young people of one of the discussion groups diverged in their opinion as to the relative value of the above. They took an impromptu vote in regard to which of the above they felt helped them most in their Christian life, with the following result: Group Bible study, 25; private devotions, 3; Sunday morning services, 3; family devotions, 2. The rest received no vote. Another group which followed the same procedure came out with these results: Sunday worship services, 22; private devotions, 10; group Bible study, 9; family devotions, 6; and reading of good literature, 2. These examples prove the great variation of opinion in this matter among the young people of a church as well as among the various churches. This is conditioned by leadership, family influence, church emphases, and even the opinion of the rest of the group while voting. The fact that Bible study ranks high indicates the necessity for stress in this area if the Christian life is to be meaningful. Dare the church neglect this field then or be satisfied with poor or mediocre teaching?

Indications are that not too much special help is given the young people in their personal Christian living with the initiative coming from the church and the pastor. Many of them are struggling through a period of doubt and uncertainty in their youth when this period can be the most fruitful in decisions for Christ. All too often those who grow up

in a Christian environment are the ones who do not receive this practical help because it is taken for granted that they will naturally follow Christ. Some of the pastors express the feeling that their work lacks in this phase, while most of them feel the church takes care of this through the normal avenues--mostly preaching and teaching. The help derived from these cannot be minimized, but more is needed as is evident from the above expressions on the part of the young people.

e. Service

"Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself."¹ Mennonites in general throughout their history have emphasized this and have tried to show their faith by their works. They have never blown the trumpet before them to draw attention to what they are doing; so that today, when their relief organization, the Mennonite Central Committee (M. C. C.), is the largest religious relief organization in the world and is recognized wherever it has come to give relief, little is known about it in this country.

The areas of service in which the young people of the Western District Conference Mennonite churches engage can be divided into the following classifications: local church, community, District and General Conference, Civilian Public Service, and relief. Some of these activities are engaged in by individuals, while others are sponsored by the group; some are direct, while others are indirect; some are spontaneous, while others are planned.

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1. James 2:17.

(1) Service in the Local Church

There are many opportunities of service for young people in the local church, and it is legitimate to assume that the young people who are given responsibilities will love their church and be loyal to it. Thirty-five pastors report using young people as ushers in the church; thirty-two say that young people serve on church committees; twenty-five have a young people's choir while in twenty-one the young people participate in the senior choir; in twenty-three churches the girls participate in the women's missionary society, while in four there are special young people's mission groups and in six others, special girls' mission groups. The young people also serve as pianists, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School teachers, editors of church papers and letters, and in various other interests.

The percentage of participation in all these activities ranges all the way from one hundred per cent to less than twenty-five per cent. Whether the difference lies with the young people or whether it can be traced to the church, or both, was not determined. Most of the pastors report an average participation of seventy-five per cent.

In the discussion of one of the young people's groups an interesting analysis was made of the ratio of young people to adults taking part in the service one Sunday morning. It was found that thirteen young people took part as ushers, choir members, players, and so on, while there were fourteen adults taking part. They agreed they had equal opportunity of service with the adults.

Most Mennonites love music and render a great service through their musical events, such as, the annual Music Festival in which most

of the Mennonite churches participate, the rendition of The Messiah by the community chorus under the auspices of Bethel College every Christmas, and the rendition of various great oratorios and cantatas by the church choirs of a number of churches at the special seasons of the year.

There are, of course, many other avenues within the local church through which the young people can serve and in which many of them do serve. One suggestion which came from one of the young people's groups was that each young person serve as a reception committee of one in the church. An area which should also be mentioned but which does not receive the stress it should in most churches is local church support. The young people, as members of the church, should be enlisted in its support. This is an area of service for them, which has in it rich blessing for them.

(2) Service in the Community

Service in the community, as reported, consists mostly of conducting services in hospitals and homes for the aged, if there are such. A few serve in this capacity in jails and county homes also; and several report such services for the aged and shut-ins of the church and community. The latter certainly is done more extensively than is reported.

Some young people's groups are much more active in community service than are others. The Fellowship in Beatrice, Nebraska, does various things along this line. One of its projects, reported in The Mennonite, is "sponsoring a public speaking course in the local high school with a Nebraska University professor as teacher. It is designated to help S. S. teachers, C. E. officers, and others in preparing, organizing,

and delivering their messages."¹ During the summer months this group has a garden project to support the canning program for the C. P. S. camps. One of the pastors, Elbert Koontz, says, "This is a very active group, and they do much for the churches and the community in service."

One young people's group distributes tracts and places highway and bus signs. Some of the boys in Civilian Public Service camps serve the communities in which they find themselves by supplying special music for church services and other functions.

(3) Service to the District and General Conferences

The young people's service to the Western District and the General Conference is rendered mostly through the youth organizations of these conferences and of the local churches, except as individual young people enter full-time service. The groups support Conference projects and activities as submitted by the various committees and boards --Board of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Education, and Publication, the Peace Committee, and others. The cause of Bethel College, as the church college in the Western District, and the cause of foreign missions are the areas in which apparently the most is done. Many churches have organized Bethel College Fellowships at the instigation of the College, which function at least once a year in a financial drive to support the school. Many of the members of these fellowships are young people. The services of these fellowships could very easily be enlisted in other work for the College.

Mission projects always have their appeal for youth. Witness the projects chosen at the 1944 Christian Endeavor Convention.² The

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1. "Youth Jottings," The Mennonite, February 27, 1945, p. 11.

2. See ante, p. 56.

interest in mission rallies and in the local church mission and harvest festivals is also an indication of this. In recent years this interest has taken on more significance in actual commitment rather than in the mere support of such activities, for young people are applying in greater numbers to the Board of Foreign Missions as candidates for full-time service. This may be due to a greater consciousness of the work that remains to be done. More contact with missionaries from the field and the knowledge derived from a wider distribution of the church periodicals due to the "100% Church Paper Plan" may account for this greater interest.

The work of many of the boards and committees of the Conference remains an unknown quantity to the greater number of young people. If the needs were known and a plan of help were presented, it is safe to assume that the young people would enter these new areas with the same zest and willingness they have evidenced in the tackling of the tasks for which they have seen the need.

At the Western District Christian Endeavor Convention of 1944 the delegates registered their belief that in the publication of young people's periodicals more economy of time and money could be effected and the financing of The Mennonite could be aided if the various district conference young people's papers would merge their efforts and, instead of the publication of separate papers in each district, only one would be published, possibly as an enlargement of the present "Mennonite Youth" section of, or as a supplement to, The Mennonite.¹ This matter was presented at the business meeting of the Young People's Union on June 2, 1945,

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1. See Resolution III of "Resolutions Adopted at the Convention," The Mennonite, August 8, 1944, p. 10.

and the following resolution was adopted: "Executive Committee is to select editor of Y. P. Section of The Mennonite and proposed supplements."¹ Accordingly, the first "youth supplement" appeared in the July 10, 1945, issue of The Mennonite; and they are to continue their appearance every quarter.

(4) Civilian Public Service

The demands of the war and the necessity of the youth of the land to answer the call of their country to service have given new impetus to the emphasis of Mennonite groups as members of a historic peace church to express their willingness to serve their country in a constructive rather than a destructive way. Through the consideration and tolerance of the United States Government provision has been made for those who feel that they cannot conscientiously engage in military service, whether combatant or non-combatant. The number of young men from the Western District who have registered their objection to a settlement of international disputes by war is considerable.²

Contrary to the accusation often brought against those who take up this service that they are unpatriotic or unwilling to risk their lives for their country or to render the demanded service, most of the young men who enter Civilian Public Service are more than willing to do all of these but in a way they feel is more pleasing to God and more compatible with Christ's teaching and example. They are willing to

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1. "Y.P.U. Resolutions Passed at General Conference," The Mennonite, July 10, 1945, p. 17.
2. Of the draftees from the Western District 436 (43%) are in 4E; 180 (18%), in 1A0; and 393 (39%) in 1A; 1289 are deferred, of which 843 have a 2C classification.--Data received from the Mennonite Central Committee headquarters through Dr. J. W. Fretz, in a letter dated July 6, 1945.

forego the government pay received by those in military service and instead receive the small allowance of \$5.00 a month. To many this spells real inconvenience, if not privation, especially in the case of married men with dependents.

Most of the boys are desirous of doing really worthwhile service, not looking for an easy way out. The types of service for which many of them have volunteered reveal this. These include service in mental and epileptic hospital units; "guinea pig" projects; health and sanitation projects; parachute fire-fighting units; and reconstruction work as soon as the war ends or the way opens for it. One unit is serving in Puerto Rico in public health activity. The unit at the Alexian Brothers Hospital in Chicago is composed mostly of men who are interested in China relief; therefore, classes in both beginning and advanced Chinese are conducted there.¹

The service these men are rendering can best be seen from reports of their work as released from the M.C.C.-C.P.S. headquarters at Akron, Pennsylvania:

" . . . Sixteen men from the C.P.S. camps at Grottoes, Luray, and Sideling Hill reported to Pinehurst, North Carolina, as members of a 45-man medical experiment unit. The men have turned themselves over as 'human guinea pigs' for medical research with atypical pneumonia. The experiment will last at least four or five months. This project, like the Mennonite unit at the University of Illinois, is under the administration of the Office of Scientific Research and Development."²

Besides the two "guinea pig" projects mentioned in the above report, there was another such project conducted at the University of Minnesota, experimenting in nutrition with special relation to post-war relief feeding.³

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1. "C.P.S.," The Mennonite, February 6, 1945, p. 11.
2. "Youth Jottings," Ibid., June 27, 1944, p. 11.
3. See "C.P.S.," Ibid., October 17, 1944, p. 6.

Other types of service are reported in the two quotations which follow:

"A squad of campers from the Camino, California, camp recently had the assignment of searching the mountains for a lost fisherman. They found him dead on a rocky bluff."¹

"Unusual interest on the part of C.P.S. men has been shown in the project and special school opening at Tiffin State Institute, Tiffin, Ohio. More than 125 men from Mennonite camps have volunteered for this twenty-five-man project. At Tiffin, Mennonite C.P.S. men will have the first opportunity to serve in an institution for the care of epileptics. Progressive measures for the rehabilitation of epileptics will be carried out"²

The work they do is not easy as can be seen from the following excerpt from an article written by a "service man in white" from the Western District who served for a time at the Duke General Hospital, Durham, North Carolina. He tells of the variety of duties an attendant in a mental hospital is called upon to do.

"Much of the work is dull routine. There are many unpleasant tasks to do, many unpleasant sights to witness. And after the regular working day is over, there is nearly always special duty to do. That is voluntary but nearly imperative that it be done. Some of the treatments require twenty-four hour attendance on the patient, and it is impossible to do this on regular work time; so the attendants have to do it in their 'free' time--attendants receiving a small amount of cash for this overtime.

"It is a personal satisfaction and thrill to talk with a patient who has recovered. To know that we as individuals have aided to a certain extent in the recovery of a person's mental condition is a superior reimbursement to receiving material gain for services rendered or time put in. We know then that being a conscientious objector has not been in vain."³

Those are some of the services the men in Civilian Public Service render. They are not drafted for these special services; they volunteer. One hundred fifteen of them have already applied for relief work after

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., June 3, 1945, p. 15.
3. Marvin Dyck, "Service Men in White," The Mennonite, May 9, 1944, p. 9.

demobilization or as soon as foreign relief opens for C.P.S. men. They are offering their services for a minimum period of two years even after giving their services without pay in the camps during the war.¹

Because of the desire on the part of many girls who want to do their share in service as well as register their conscientious objection to war, women's training units were begun in the summer of 1944 and continued in the summer of 1945. At present there are eighty girls in the five units, serving as attendants in mental hospitals or at the Mennonite Central Committee headquarters.² Quite a number of nurses are serving as camp nurses at various base camps for the very nominal salary paid for these services when they might take lucrative positions elsewhere while salaries are high and positions are plentiful. Others with dietetic or home economics training are serving as dietitians in these camps. Both of these areas present the challenge to girls thus trained to share in the peace testimony and witness of the church and to serve Christ and the church in this capacity.

(5) Relief Service

Of necessity this has already been touched upon, for this area of service can hardly be separated from the above area.

The relief work of the Mennonite Central Committee has expanded greatly during World War II due to the great need in war-stricken areas; and Western District young people have also felt the call to this service. Most of them have pledged their support through the projects; some have

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1. Information received from Fretz, letter of July 6, 1945.
2. The data concerning the women's units of 1945 are as follows: Cleveland, Ohio, hospital, 20 girls; Ypsilanti, Michigan, 15; Wernersville, Pennsylvania, 7; Poughkeepsie, New York, 25; Akron, Pennsylvania, headquarters, 15.--"C.P.S.," The Mennonite, June 12, 1945, p. 12.

helped in the relief clothing centers,¹ while a few have offered their services in over-seas relief and are now serving in England or France, Paraguay or Puerto Rico, in the Middle or Far East. The term of service is two years. Others are preparing now for the expanded program of relief and rehabilitation which will be carried out when the European and Asiatic countries which are now closed are opened for post-war relief. This will be hazardous work as they are well aware, but it will be work of Christian love which may in a small way be able to relieve the bitterness and hatred engendered by the war and heal the broken bodies, minds, and hearts of the war victims.

Because of the experience the young men and women serving in the mental hospital units have received and the need for such service, the question has arisen about the possibility and advisability of opening church-supported mental hospitals. This matter has a large place in the consideration of the leaders in the units and other church leaders. At its triennial meeting, May 31 to June 5, 1945, the General Conference voted unanimously to encourage the M.C.C. to build a hospital for mental patients, instructing the General Conference Relief Board to do this if the M.C.C. did not see fit to carry out such a project.

In the field of relief the nursing profession should not be overlooked, although this might come under community service. Because only three of the twenty hospitals maintained by Mennonites in the United States and Canada offer training courses² and these are limited in

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1. The clothing centers are located in Newton, Kansas; Ephrata, Pennsylvania; and Kitchener, Ontario.
2. See Fretz, "Meditations on the Mennonites," The Mennonite, February 27, 1945, p. 4.

facilities and, therefore, can accept only small classes, many girls who have the inclination to take this type of training either do not take it or else go to secularly controlled hospitals. Dr. Fretz makes the following plea in his discussion on the ministry of nursing:

"Our girls ought to be encouraged to enter the field of nursing. There is a crying need for them and there is unlimited opportunity for service, BUT--they must be encouraged to go into hospitals where they are taught nursing as a form of Christian ministry. This means hospitals that are controlled by the Church. Hospitals which are indeed a wing of the church. Hospitals whose passion for lost souls is as great as the church's passion is (or ought to be). . . . Nurses must be trained, who besides taking temperatures of the body and relieving physical pain, can also read a patient's spiritual temperature and relieve worry and mental distress by ministering to them in the name of Christ. The Church must not surrender the field of nurses' training to the State. It must keep this work in its care and nurture it, prosper it, and preserve an occupation of service with a soul."¹

2. Other Service of the Church to Its Youth

Besides the service which the church renders to its youth through the five areas of the religious education curriculum there are other special types of services which will be discussed below.

a. Contacting of Absent Members

The church's interest in the young people away from home must be displayed in a very tangible way if these young people are to have the comfort and assurance that the church at home is behind them and interested in their well-being. Many churches keep in touch with their absent members by publishing a church paper or letter or both. Twelve pastors report the former; and twenty, the latter. Some pastors report a personal correspondence with all the boys in the service, which is possible in a small church but which would not be practicable when the number of absentees

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1. Ibid.

rises to staggering proportions. A few Christian Endeavor groups report sponsoring correspondence with those away.

b. Vocational Guidance

Only two pastors report that the church is doing something definite in helping the young people choose a vocation; and none help them prepare for the vocation chosen or aid them in getting started. This is a field which has not demanded the church's attention to any great extent in the past but which will have to be engaged in in the future if the church is to fulfill its service to the complete life of its members and hold its young people. Church leaders are becoming increasingly aware of this need as is seen from articles appearing in the church papers, addresses at church conferences, and discussions at Christian workers' conferences.

c. Financial and Other Aid

Three churches report making provision for financial aid to young people in getting a higher education. That there are so few may be due to the lack of emphasis on education and training in the past when it was commonly held that those who planned to become farmers or housewives had no need for education. Even today many of the older, and some of the younger generation voice their surprise when young people who want to be "only" farmers or housewives enter college. It is a calamity that the church has not recognized its obligation to help those who desire further education and training and even yet does not recognize it. Many who might have become active workers in the church or school or mission field have been hindered from serving to the extent of their capacity through a lack of training.

It is doubtful whether there are any Mennonite churches that give financial aid to those in military service since these men receive pay. Twenty-two pastors report that the church is giving aid to C.P.S. men. Whether this is aside from the \$6.00-a-year quota per member as determined by the M.C.C. for the maintaining of the camps or not has not been determined. Many churches or societies do provide small allowances for their men or send occasional gifts of money or stamps.

Only four churches report making plans now for the returning service men--military and C.P.S. This will have to be done more generally; or it may present one of the knottiest problems that has ever confronted the church, not only because of the differing opinions as to what should be done in accepting the men back, but also because of the great problem facing them in taking up vocations, continuing their education, and in general being given a useful and profitable place as members of the church and civilian society again.

d. Follow-up of New Members

The new members referred to are the young people in particular who have joined the church through baptism recently.¹ As is the case in many other churches, so here too these young people often become the "forgotten generation." All of the churches studied apparently offer special catechetical instruction for about eight months preceding baptismal services. This may be taken for one term, or more if desired. But as soon as they have become members, they disappear again among the rest with no follow-up work being done. There are seven churches that report having

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1. Many Mennonite churches have baptismal services on Pentecost Sunday. In one church (the Alexanderwohl Church) 76 young people were baptized and received into the fellowship of the church in 1945.

special follow-up classes for the new members.

e. Doctrinal Teaching

To make a special point of this may seem superfluous; but if the Mennonite Church has a distinctive place to fill and a contribution to make to society, it must lay special emphasis on doctrinal teaching and keep its young people acquainted with its unique principles and ministry, else it will lose its uniqueness and testimony. History shows that principles that are not taught become extinct. As Miller says:

"Education is the servant and handmaid of ideals. When in the experience of any group of people a particular set of ideals is no longer effectively taught to the masses, it may be assumed with certainty that the influence of these ideals will at once begin to wane and if education is long neglected, their influence as a dominant force in society will gradually grow weaker and finally become extinct. . . ."¹

3. Participation in Community and Church-related Organizations

There are a number of factors that condition the amount of participation in community and church-related organizations, such as, what organizations there are in the community, the policies and standards of these organizations, the attitude of the parents and the church, and others.

a. Community Organizations

The organizations that count the largest number of Mennonite young people among their members, according to the questionnaires, are the following, in order: 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers of America, Girl Reserve and Hi-Y, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

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1. Minor C. Miller, Teaching the Multitudes, p. 1

b. District Denominational Activities

A very popular and worthwhile activity is the Young People's Retreat, a five-day summer camp held annually at Camp Wood, a Y.M.C.A. camp near Elmdale, Kansas. The last two summers another Retreat was held at Meno, Oklahoma, to enable the young people from Oklahoma to attend a youth camp since they were not able to attend the one in Kansas because of the distance involved. In accordance with a resolution of the Christian Endeavor Convention in 1944 the Retreat Committee has set up plans for an Intermediate Retreat to be held on the Bethel College Campus, August 6 to 10, 1945. This will be the first one held in the district.¹ The same Convention resolved to have the Retreat Committee investigate the possibility of having smaller Retreats in outlying districts.² The possibility of pooling and dividing the expenses of all the Retreaters was also discussed although no action was taken.

The young people of most of the churches are active in the Christian Endeavor and Sunday School Conventions. At the Christian Endeavor Convention in 1944 "thirty-three C.E. societies from thirty different churches were represented."³ Outlying communities are usually deprived of the privilege of representation since the conventions are held in centrally located places and nothing is done to cut the expenses of delegates from a distance.

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1. "Resolutions Adopted at the Convention," The Mennonite, August 8, 1944, p. 10.
2. Ibid.
3. "Representatives from Thirty-three C.E.'s Attend Annual Convention," Western District Tidings, September, 1944, p. 6.

The occasional peace and mission rallies, sponsored by the peace and mission committees of the Christian Endeavor Convention, have been very successful in the past. In 1943 the young people of the First Mennonite Church, Newton, launched a new venture by planning a Youth Conference for the Friday following Thanksgiving Day, with an afternoon program planned for the local young people, followed by a recreation period and a dinner. At the evening meeting the young people of the First Mennonite Church were host to the young people of the Western District Conference churches within driving distance. The same plan was followed in 1944.

During the week-end following the Christmas holidays, 1944, a number of such youth conferences were held in centrally located churches of several communities.¹ These were planned around topics and discussions of a very practical nature. They combined study and worship with recreation and practical help.

The benefits derived from youth conferences and rallies are recognized more and more. The young people of the Hydro, Cordell, and Bessie, Oklahoma, churches had a youth rally at the Bergtal Church at Corn, May 11 and 12, 1945.² Some of these churches had had a similar one in 1944. In their 1944 report of the rally they say: "We find that it helps to bring the young people of the community closer together and affords them Christian recreation as well as a spiritual blessing,"³ and they encourage all Mennonite young people to plan such Christian social gatherings.

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1. See The Mennonite of January 9 and 16, 1945, for reports of conferences.
2. "Youth Jottings," Ibid., May 15, 1945, p. 10.
3. "Youth Rally," Ibid., June 27, 1944, p. 10.

The Halstead, Kansas, young people hold an annual retreat, sponsored by the local Christian Endeavor society at a park within easy driving distance. This is a unique activity which might well be copied by young people of other societies. A part of their report follows:

" . . . The day began with registration at 9:30, following which the retreat's special speaker led the morning worship and the instruction period. In the afternoon after settling a large picnic dinner by playing catch, ping pong, and loafing, Rev. Wedel led the group in singing several negro spirituals. Then all present were divided into two large 'committees,' with an adult leader in charge of each group. The one discussed what sort of programs we wished to have in the coming year, including various suggestions for special speakers and other ways of stimulating a greater interest among the members. The other group discussed the various projects and parties to be undertaken. The two groups then again assembled on the lawn for a period of fun songs. The remainder of the afternoon was spent in playing group games, ping pong, and softball. After the evening meal and song services, the day was closed by an inspiring message by the retreat speaker. Judging from the attendance and enthusiasm shown, this project has become definitely established as an annual affair."¹

c. Interdenominational Activities

There are a number of conferences, conventions, rallies, etc., sponsored by district or state interdenominational groups in which Mennonite societies might cooperate. Nine pastors report participation in such county or district conventions; and six, in state conventions. Merely to remain aloof from these because of some minor points of difference should be discouraged, for the young people themselves and their societies are robbed of the inspiration there is in meeting with groups from other fellowships who are also interested in the work of God's Kingdom. They are prevented from catching new visions and getting new ideas. The Mennonite young people are also hindered from making their contribution to such gatherings, which they should have opportunity of doing if they have such a contribution to make. If not, why keep them separate?

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1. "Hold Unique Retreat," The Mennonite, September 5, 1944, p. 11.

C. Summary

To be able to present suggestions for more effective and extensive young people's work in the General Conference Mennonite churches of the Western District the present status had to be determined. To do this was the purpose of this chapter. Through the tabulation of data received from the forty-nine questionnaires that were returned, the results of discussion groups held by the young people of five churches in the district, personal knowledge of the work in a number of churches, and investigation of reports appearing in The Mennonite, it is believed that a fairly accurate picture of the present status of youth work has been given.

The location and distribution of the Mennonite population in the district were determined first, and here it was found that there are two types of Mennonite communities--the solid and the isolated. The approximate number of young people this particular branch of the Mennonite Church has in its fellowship for whose total well-being it is responsible was also discovered.

The survey of the present young people's program concerned itself with the five areas of the Christian education curriculum. The area which apparently is the most developed and receives the greatest stress is service in special areas. In all of the areas, including service in the local church and community, though notable advance is being made by some groups, there remains much to be done before they can come to their fullest fruition in the lives of the young men and women of the Mennonite churches.

The survey continued with an investigation of other services rendered by the church to its youth. Such services as contacting absent members, vocational guidance, financial aid for those desiring a higher education and for service men, follow-up of new members, and special doctrinal teaching it was discovered were rather meager in scope, the great majority of churches doing little or nothing along these practical lines.

Next a study was made of the participation of Mennonite young people in other organizations, both those related to the church and those not related to it, Christian and secular--community organizations, district denominational activities, and interdenominational activities. The participation in the first two was found to be considerable; the value of participation in the last-named apparently is not recognized. Note was taken of the new movement of holding youth conferences among a number of churches in neighboring communities within the district.

Much has been done by and for youth in some of the Mennonite churches studied. Much remains to be done if the church is to fulfill completely its God-given mission, which is to minister, not only toward the salvation of the individual, but also to his growth in every phase of life after his salvation.

CHAPTER III

THE FUTURE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK
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A. Introduction

The church is run by, and designed for, the old people is the complaint often made by youth. Whether this is justified or not is not the question; the question is what can be done to help the young people to take their places of service in the church and to give them the help needed in living the abundant life in worship, study, the social and recreational activities, their personal Christian living, and their service. If the church does not provide the help here, it fails in its duty to its youth.

In the light of the study of the rural church in general and of the young people's work in the General Conference Mennonite churches of the Western District in particular, this chapter proposes to present aims and objectives for the various areas of the Christian education curriculum and to offer suggestions or to cite examples of how these aims and objectives may be realized.

The questionnaires disclosed that many of the churches in the study do not provide an adequate program of youth work, that the methods and procedures are the same in some of the churches as they were perhaps twenty-five years ago or even earlier. Though the message of the church remains the same in every age, methods will have to change to fit each new day. Any church that insists on using the same methods in the machine age that it used in the "horse-and-buggy days" may awake some

day to find that the young people are gradually disappearing. As McLaughlin says: "Men, women, and children have been lost because the leaders of the church refused to change their tactics to serve spiritual interests under new conditions."¹

B. Furthering the Young People's Program

In considering the question of how Mennonite churches can further their youth work the five areas of the Christian education curriculum will be taken up in terms of aims and objectives, methods and procedures, and values in outcome.

1. Worship

a. Aims and Objectives

Worship is the communion of the soul with God. Or as Blackwood defines it: "Worship is man's response to God's revelation of himself. In a high sense worship includes both the revelation and the response. . ."² Its aim or purpose is "to establish and develop that filial relationship with God and Christlike fellowship with men through which the worshiper shares God's spirit and purpose and receives strength for Christian living."³ In other words, it is two-sided; and it is horizontal as well as vertical in its motivation, for it enters into the daily life of the individual and his relation to others.

If the aims and objectives of worship were kept in mind by the minister as he serves in the pulpit and by the parents as they sit

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1. McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 63.
2. Andrew W. Blackwood, The Fine Art of Public Worship, p. 14.
3. Frank D. Getty, "Building a Young People's Society Program," p. 15.

around the dinner table discussing the service in the hearing of the children and young people, the right attitudes and motives could be instilled in the hearts of youth. This, however, is often not the case. Is it any wonder, then, that in many Mennonite churches the young people have everything else in mind but the worship of God when they attend church on Sunday morning?

b. Methods and Aids

Since the worship in the house of God on the Lord's Day is the highest expression of the individual, the family, and the community, and the mountain peak of the whole week, it deserves the most careful planning and performance. The best work is required in the service of the Lord. It is essential, therefore, that an orderly worship service be planned with careful attention to every detail of procedure. Edward K. Ziegler says that a good worship service is a work of art, and gives these principles to be followed in planning a worship service: (1) Unity, (2) Continuity, (3) Variation, (4) Sharing, (5) Proper balance, and (6) Alternation and movement.¹

There are many aids to worship at the disposal of the leader of the service. Some of these are Scripture, prayer, music, silence, the offering, and the sermon.

The reading of the Scripture, whether it is done alone by the leader, responsively by leader and group, or in unison, should always be done with dignity and reverence. Never should slovenly reading of God's Word be tolerated. In it God speaks to the congregation directly; therefore

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1. See Edward K. Ziegler, A Book of Worship for Village Churches, pp. 44-46.

it should be accorded one of the most important places in the service of worship, and the congregation should be made to feel this importance.

Prayer can greatly enrich the worship service, and will if it is rightly used. It is not easy to bring every one into participation in prayer, but it should be done as far as possible. Sometimes the use of directed prayer will bring this about. The congregation must feel that they are treading on holy ground when they enter into prayer. If they duly feel this, they will feel the inconsistency of looking around or thinking their own thoughts during this act of worship.

Music can be a marvelous aid to worship; but it can also become an abomination, and has become the latter in many churches. All the music used, whether vocal or instrumental, should have a calm dignity that will induce reverence. The message is the important thing, the melody enhancing the message. Songs with guitar accompaniment used for special music in some rural churches are not acceptable since the emphasis is so definitely on the rhythm which often mars the message if used with a perfectly legitimate song or hymn.

The hymns, to be truly meaningful, should be sung in a devotional spirit, with dignity and majesty. There may be a place in some types of service for the more lively gospel song, but never in a Sunday morning worship service.

Mennonites with their rich tradition in the majestic German chorales, many of which have been rendered into good English translations, ought to endeavor to uphold their record of good congregational

singing, of which Edward K. Ziegler speaks:

"Congregational singing should have a large place in rural worship. Some of the finest congregational singing in America may still be heard among the Mennonites and Brethren and Moravians. In many of their churches the singing of the great old chorales and hymns is unaccompanied, but rich in harmony and fervor."¹

Most rural Mennonite churches do not use a choir regularly. A choir is not essential although it greatly aids in worship services if it conceives of its function as an aid in the worship of God and sings numbers within its powers. If it is used, there should be a definite place for it, for the message cannot have the desired effect if the choir must gather from various parts of the sanctuary to render its number and then disperse again.

Silence is a very effective aid to worship, but it is seldom used. Silence in itself is not worship. If it is used, it must be when a point in the service has been reached where silence will be meaningful. When such a point has been reached (which happens seldom in rural Mennonite churches) and every heart is ready to reach out to God, it is unforgivable to break into that moment with something extraneous to that experience and lose the effect of such a moment.

The offering has not received the attention in Mennonite churches it should have. It should be a definite part of worship with a definite place in every service, for it symbolizes the dedication of the giver of himself to God. In many Mennonite churches there is no regular offering; and on Sundays when one is taken, it is no uncommon occurrence to hear the minister announce as an afterthought

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1. Ziegler, "Country Altars," p. 29.

at the close of the service, "The collection will go to _____." When the "collection" becomes an "offering" and the man in the pew realizes that all he has and life itself is only a stewardship, then he will be well along the road to making his church attendance a worship experience.

The sermon is only a part of the total worship service, and it should contribute toward the worship experience rather than be considered the end and goal of the service. Goodrich R. Fenner says, "If only one sentence about preaching in rural churches were allowed it would be that 'the best is never too good.' . . . Rural church preaching should have for its ideal the preaching of our Lord. . . ."1

Roadman emphasizes the content of the message when he says:

"Restlessness during the sermon is a matter of interest, not of minutes. A clear, timely message of forty-five minutes will seem far shorter to the average mind than a dull, hazy, or platitudinous talk of twenty-five minutes. Protest about sermon length is a challenge to its content."2

Ziegler throws out the question to ministers: "Would we country preachers dare to allow discussions of the sermon afterward? Why should not provision frequently be made for it?"3 This, of course, would be apart from the worship service and could be very easily done, perhaps to good advantage, if the unified plan as presented under Study were followed.4

What the young people themselves want in a sermon can best be given from a compilation and classification of answers received by

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1. Goodrich R. Fenner, The Episcopal Church in Town and Country, p. 15.
2. Roadman, op. cit., p. 48.
3. Ziegler, "Country Altars," p. 37.
4. See post, p. 100.

an investigator of the attitude of youth toward the sermon:

"Among these random remarks certain threads of emphasis are plainly visible. These young people want sincerity in the preacher. They are quick to notice and resent undue gesticulation. They much prefer a manner that is quiet, serious, and natural. Their chief demand of the sermon seems to be that it help them in their daily living. They do not care particularly that it be Biblical, although some do mention the Bible. They do not seem at all interested in its being learned. They do not want to be dazzled; they want to be helped. Strangely, they do not seem primarily concerned that it be interesting. They do not plead for illustrations, or anecdotes, or spectacular devices. They do not want to be amused; they want to be helped. . . . They want no juvenile sermon; no story-sermon; no sermon which will avoid all strain upon their intelligence. They do ask for clearness, but, if we can take them at their word, they are more than willing that it be meaty and intellectually worthy. . . ."¹

Should the minister, then, prepare his sermons to satisfy the young people, with no consideration for the adults of his congregation? No; he must satisfy both. On occasion he may preach on subjects of peculiar interest to one or the other age group; some themes which would vary in emphasis for the two groups he might treat in a bi-focal manner; but in most cases, when subjects of universal interest and need are dealt with, a sermon prepared for youth will find as ready a response by adults as by youth.

c. Atmosphere

Most Mennonite churches are very extreme in their simplicity; others are beautiful in the same way. Atmosphere in most of them must be created by other means than elaborate and ornate buildings and soft strains of pipe-organ music. But it is of value to create atmosphere in common, ordinary surroundings, for worship will then not be associated

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1. Nevin C. Harner, The Educational Work of the Church, pp. 173-174.

only with certain buildings and other outward conditions and will have more carry-over value. The important thing is that the atmosphere be there. Besides the definite efforts made to create it, there are certain incidental factors that aid or hinder. Ziegler says:

"The rural church may be small, simple, and inexpensively built, but it need never be ugly, incongruous, unkempt, or neglected. It should always be the most beautiful building in the community, and the grounds surrounding it should be planted with shrubs, trees, flowers, and grass, so that it is as the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land' to every rural dweller and to every passer-by."¹

Such things as color schemes, windows, seating arrangement, or such unsightly things as dust, torn or disarranged hymnals, in short, anything that gives discomfort or offends good taste should be avoided, so that there is nothing that detracts from the spirit of worship. It is psychologically true that pleasant memories follow a pleasant experience and awaken the desire to duplicate that experience, and vice versa; therefore, if the worship experience is associated with comfort and beauty, the consequence will be that the worshiper will look forward to a repetition of this experience. And since his personal attitude has much to do with his worship, all things should be made to work together to mold that attitude.

McLaughlin says it is not at all difficult to create the spirit of worship in the rural church and suggests the following:

"There must be careful preparation of the order of service and a deliberate effort to carry through the entire period of worship a single-hearted theme. Then, we need the right attitudes. We must learn to enter the church worship service in reverence, to omit all visitations until after the service is over, to refrain

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1. Ziegler, "Country Altars," p. 15.

from conversations and gesticulations to friends and visitors. Congregations must be taught not to impose upon the pastor frivolous matters just as he enters the pulpit and the leader must know that the way he begins the service, the manner in which he opens the Bible, the spirit of his prayers, the quiet assurance of God in his own soul will inspire the entire hour with a new sense of reverence and dignity. Confusions and conversations are inexcusable before and during services. Let all who come, come in the spirit of humble seeking, in the spirit of prayer and eager expectancy."¹

Continual vigilance and education, direct and indirect, will be required in most Mennonite churches before this will be accomplished, but when once brought about the result will be highly rewarding.

d. The Evening Service

All that has been said applies to the Sunday evening worship service as much as to that of the morning except that this could be planned and conducted in a less formal way. The evening service, therefore, could feature greater variety in content and procedure, making use of such devices as dramatization, sacred concerts, films or slides, all, of course, within the realm of the Christian faith and as supplements to the spoken message.

Most Mennonite churches in the district studied still feel it either impractical or impossible to have evening services every Sunday, but with an active and interested young people's group this should be not only possible but highly desirable. If designed for them, and participated in by them, it would counteract the attraction of commercial amusements which are frequented by young people today, often because there is nothing else for them to do. If the evening services were made interesting and helpful, the other would have no attraction.

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1. McLaughlin, Religious Education in the Rural Church, pp. 159-160.

John W. Mettam of Money Creek, Minnesota, reports on a plan that was tried in his church during the summer, which might serve as a suggestion to Mennonite rural churches. During July and August the services were held on the lawns of the farm homes, and the last few years pageantry was included as a special feature. He says:

"It must not be thought that this is just a religious show. The devotional and worship side is always put first. It is a good thing for the young people taking part too. They find a real place of usefulness on this occasion. The lessons are driven home to the hearts of the people in so vivid a way that they cannot easily be forgotten. . . . When we compare the numbers who attend our lawn services with the few who would ordinarily attend our little church on Sunday evenings in summer, and also the good influence of the meetings on the community, it seems to us very much worth while."¹

One Sunday they had as their special feature a sacred concert by the home choir and a neighboring choir. The service was held in a rolling spot with one choir on one hill and the other on another. They sang antiphonally and then were brought together at the end for the "Hallelujah Chorus." What Mennonite group with its love for music would not be thrilled with such an experience!

e. Value in Outcomes

The value of a true and vital worship experience in the Mennonite Church cannot be measured except as it produces men, women, youth, and children who show the effects in their everyday lives-- in their farming, their housekeeping, their relations to each other in the home and community and church, and in their passion to make available to others in the community and in the regions beyond that

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1. Roadman, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

same experience through the knowledge of the living God and his Son, Jesus Christ. This should be the aim of every worship service, or that part of the Sunday School period, Christian Endeavor, or midweek service which is designed for worship.

2. Study

Under the topic of study will be considered the Sunday School, the Christian Endeavor, the midweek service, and other agencies dealing with education, even though some of these do not restrict themselves to the field of education alone.

a. Sunday School

(1) Aims and Objectives

"The goal of Christian education is Christlike character,"¹ says Cynthia Pearl Maus. And she continues:

"This goal is not reached when boys and girls know about Jesus or even when they have formally committed themselves to him by uniting with the church; it is reached when boys and girls and young people habitually live the life of Jesus in all of life's situations and relationships. Understanding does not constitute living the Jesus way. Explaining Jesus' life and personality is not our ultimate task; but so to enshrine Christ in the thinking, feeling, and willing of young people as to enable them to radiate his spirit in their daily lives."²

As a means of planning his work and as a standard against which to check his achievement, the Sunday School teacher should constantly keep before him the eight objectives developed by the International Council of Religious Education.³

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1. Cynthia Pearl Maus, Youth Organized for Religious Education, p. 27.
2. Ibid.
3. See "The International Standard for The Sunday Church School," p. 4. Copies of the Standard may be secured from the International Council of Religious Education, 205 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago.

The teachers who now feel that they have done their duty if they have taken one hour on Sunday morning to stand before a class without previous preparation and with their only aim to pass the time would stand condemned under the scrutiny of the objectives of the International Council. Something must be done in Mennonite churches to familiarize the teachers with these objectives and with their responsibility as teachers.

(2) Methods and Organization

In an attempt to be witty, the question is sometimes asked, "When is a school not a school?" The expected answer is, "When it is a church school." This answer is too often justified; for in making a comparison with the methods and organization of the public school, the Sunday School emerges with great discredit.

If the test of the method is its accomplishment, then the methods used in most Sunday Schools leave much to be desired. Biblical knowledge and ethical judgment tests given in recent years reveal the woeful ignorance of most young people of Bible facts and principles.¹ Mennonite young people are not excluded here; for the ignorance of high school students who have been to Sunday School and church all their lives and have attended the annually held Vacation Bible Schools for perhaps eight years is appalling. This definitely indicts the methods used since they have failed to make the teaching practical and meaningful.

To become effective the Sunday School must be placed on at least an equal with the public school educationally. If the one hour

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1. See Miller, op. cit., pp. 12-13. Also cf. Harner, op. cit., pp. 101-2.

on Sunday cannot be extended in length either on Sunday morning or with an extended session Sunday night or during the week, at least that one hour should be made to count for the greatest possible good. The teachers should have the qualifications given in the preceding chapter--knowledge of God, the Bible, the child, and the teaching method. They should be given the necessary equipment; or, if this is impossible, they should at least make the best use of the equipment on hand. If it is impossible to have the classes meet in separate rooms, the room used should be so arranged as to effect the greatest privacy and attractiveness possible. Often there are corners or unused spaces that might be utilized. On warm pleasant days some of the classes may want to meet outside if there is a grassy, shady lawn.

Some Sunday Schools have found a pre-view of a quarter's work a great aid for teaching. Before the quarter begins, the teachers of each department get together to get acquainted with the material and to plan ahead, so that all the necessary materials can be supplied on time. One teacher in Chicago conceived the idea of having a "quarterly pre-view party" with her intermediates. This made the material meaningful and interesting to the students.¹

The methods used must be the best, for it is a crime against the pupil and a breach of the trust God has given if anything less than the best is tolerated in carrying on the work of Christian teaching.

Great improvement could be made in most Sunday Schools in the Western District as far as organization is concerned. It was seen

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1. See Vartan D. Melconian, "The Pre-View as an Aid to Learning," Presbytery of Chicago.

from the questionnaires that most churches religiously follow the schedule: Opening exercises, class period, and closing exercises. There are a few that seem to have realized the saving of time that there is in preceding the Sunday School period with the regular worship service. In most cases the "opening exercises" are a waste of time and an inducement to late-coming, which indicates the meaninglessness of this service.

A suggestion that is worth consideration, especially in Mennonite churches where everybody attends both the Sunday School and church service, is the unification of the Sunday School with the worship service. This plan provides for the worship service first on Sunday morning to serve as the period of worship in its own right as well as preparation for the study period to follow. This plan allows usage of the full Sunday School hour for study and work, and more might be accomplished with the atmosphere and inspiration of the worship service still freshly in mind. This plan would also make possible to young people's and adult classes the occasional discussion of the sermon with the pastor or teacher, thus increasing its value.

The local situation will determine the methods chosen, for they should be the most effective for the particular situation. No

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1. In speaking of "opening exercises" Edwin E. Sundt says in The Country Church and Our Generation, "What a travesty on one of the holiest experiences in life to speak of the hymns, prayers, responsive readings, and meditations as 'preliminaries' or, what is more vulgar, 'opening exercises'! Worship is an art and the noblest of all arts in the life of a Christian. It can be cultivated and guided with patience and forethought, but it is in no sense an exercise, and even less is it a preliminary."--p. 78.

church should be guilty of sticking to an ineffective method merely because it is the traditional one. Mrs. Williamson suggests that the test of the method should be what Christ would do if he were in the community.¹

The employment of a director of religious education is practically unknown in Mennonite churches. Those who are responsible for the direction of the educational work in the church are still elected by popular vote regardless of qualification or interest; and, as was seen in the preceding chapter, the teachers of the young people are largely chosen by the young people themselves. In some cases it happens that the persons chosen are those best qualified, but there is nothing to insure this. If it is impossible to have a paid director of religious education, or until the churches realize the necessity of having someone trained as a Christian worker give his full time to the religious education program of the church, each church should at least aim to get those best qualified as superintendent and teachers. This is impossible as long as they are chosen by popular vote; and Sunday School teaching will continue to be mediocre or poor.

Mennonite churches, which must depend upon their teaching ministry for the preservation of their principles, would do well to give careful attention to whatever methods will make for the greatest efficiency. Because of their history they are inclined to be suspicious of any change, often to the detriment of their best interests. But in spite of the tenacious clinging to old methods and customs on the part of some, there are those who, when they have caught the vision,

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1. See Williamson, op. cit., p. 47.

are courageous enough to advocate and institute progressive measures.

A director of religious education, in some instances, is employed by groups of neighboring churches rather than by one church. She then plans and directs all the activities in this field for all the churches. She serves in cooperation with the pastor, dividing her time among the churches in those activities that cannot be directed jointly.

The three churches in the Goessel, Kansas, community working in conjunction with the Goessel Rural High School would present an ideal set-up for the experimentation with such a plan. According to a plan advocated by Waldo O. Schmidt, the principal of the school, the high school, with the permission of the county and state departments of education, would add a fifth year to its regular curriculum. This would consist of Bible study and religious education courses. A full-time worker, paid jointly by the three churches, would teach the courses during the week to Sunday School teachers and others interested and direct the religious education activities in all three of the churches. Since one of the churches has a membership of around one thousand and another, over four hundred, this would really be more than one person could take care of. With the help of the local superintendents, however, much could be accomplished. It is well worth a trial, for it is definitely a step in the right direction. The same plan might be followed in other churches in cooperation with a centrally located high school if the school is more or less of a solid Mennonite constituency or if the other churches are willing to cooperate in such a plan, presupposing that the public school favors the move.

The church's part in furthering and supporting the cause of Christian education in the academies and colleges also has a place here. The educational work of the Conference depends for its strength upon the individual churches, and this work should very definitely be included in the program of the church year. Education as a whole should find a place, and recognition should be given to the students of the church. One good plan is to have the students--from grade school to college or university--sit in a body in the worship service the Sunday preceding the opening of school in September and on baccalaureate Sunday in the spring.

(3) Leadership

Credit must be given to the many faithful and consecrated Sunday School teachers who have left their mark upon the young men and women who have gone out from the Mennonite churches in the past. But with all due credit to these, consecration alone is not enough in the present age. It is necessary, but more is needed. Leaders must be trained leaders from among the local membership. If Jesus, the Master Teacher, realized the possibilities in specially trained lay leaders in his work, certainly the pastors of today must realize their need and welcome such leaders. Many of them express the feeling that they are expected to do all the work because of unwillingness to work on the part of the members or because of a lack of leadership. More often than is believed can potential leaders be found among the farmers and housewives or young people of the church as Jesus found them among the fishermen and tax-collectors of his day. They need only to be discovered, their interest aroused, and their capabilities developed through training.

Harner has selected the following as the fundamentals in which every teacher should be trained: (1) the essentials of the Christian religion; (2) thorough sensitivity to the individual needs of their pupils; (3) planning of a lesson; and (4) the use of a quarterly or text.¹ Some of the avenues of training open to most Sunday School teachers, if they are willing to avail themselves of them, are Christian workers' institutes and conferences, short-term courses in nearby cities, college courses, visits to churches that have very efficient church schools, correspondence courses, or books and magazines on methods and procedures. Too often the only materials used by the teachers are lesson helps which are predigested and serve as crutches rather than helps if they are not used wisely.

Many churches have monthly or quarterly workers' conferences, which, if planned carefully, are of great practical help. To give dignity to the position of Sunday School leaders and to impress them with their responsibility, an impressive installation service is conducted in some churches during the worship service at the opening of the new Sunday School year. Mennonite churches might find in this a good suggestion to copy.

The summer of 1944 witnessed a new development in the Mennonite Church when a Christian Workers' Institute was inaugurated for C.P.S. men interested in special Christian service as well as for young people ready to enter full-time service at the time. This institute was designed for workers desiring to enter full-time Christian service, but

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1. See Harner, op. cit., pp. 106-110.

the plan presents a great possibility for the practical training of religious education workers in the local churches. On March 17, 1945, a "Workshop" was conducted under the auspices of the Western District Conference Education Committee on the Bethel College campus. This was planned for prospective Vacation Bible School teachers. It emphasized the practical alongside the inspirational. The above activities are hopeful signs within the Mennonite Church, which, if enlarged, may in time develop into a strong leadership training program for local leaders.

(4) Value in Outcomes

"One step toward even a distant goal is worth the effort," someone has said; and gradually the Mennonite Church is taking a few steps toward adopting new and progressive methods in the program of Christian education. Much education of Mennonite opinion is still necessary before these measures will be generally adopted and effectively used. Some churches are ready for this advance now, and some have already gone forward with big strides. The churches which count among their members a few who are accepted as leaders and whose opinions are respected and usually adopted will most likely be the ones to blaze the trail toward a more effective and efficient teaching ministry in the Sunday School.

The test of the method is the outcome in Christian character. What kind of character does the Sunday School produce? This should be tested by the eight objectives of the International Council, which not only set the goal toward which the Christian teacher strives, but which also set the standard of measurement by which he judges the success of his teaching method.

b. Christian Endeavor

(1) Aims and Objectives

No organization can be effective without specific aims and objectives. The name, Christian Endeavor, indicates a general aim; but how many members of societies thus named know what the society is endeavoring to do? The aim of any young people's society might be stated subjectively as, "the development of a growing Christian personality in each individual,"¹ or objectively as "training young Christians for service."² Specific aims and objectives should be formulated by each society in the light of the interests and needs of its own membership. Phelps suggests the following objectives in attempting to accomplish the general aim: (1) a deepened devotional life; (2) a positive relation to the church; (3) a vital interest in others; and (4) a knowledge of the denomination--history, doctrine, aims.³

Through a definite emphasis on distinct aims and objectives and a sincere endeavor to reach these, always keeping in mind the end-goal of training young people for Christian service, the Christian Endeavor society can become one of the most vital elements for Christian growth and nurture in the local church.

(2) Methods and Organization

For the accomplishment of aims and objectives definite plans of procedure must be worked out. This involves organization and method. The analysis of the information received through the questionnaire reveals that the Christian Endeavor societies in most churches are very

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1. Getty, op. cit., p. 10.
2. Edwin Phelps, The Pathfinder in Church Work with Young People, p. 43.
3. See Ibid., p. 55.

loosely organized. Very few report a separate society for the young people. Although there are advantages in having a General or Senior Christian Endeavor, which includes all ages, this should be supplemented with a young people's society. The determining factor should be how the goal of "training young Christians for service" can best be reached. Since training is based on practice, naturally a smaller, graded society affords more opportunity for practice in the various functions.

Every organization must have leaders. In the young people's society the leaders are the officers and the adviser. The officers include the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Then there are the chairmen of the various committees, who also have special functions. The number and types of committees will vary with the needs and conditions of the local groups. Everything should be planned to accomplish the program upon which the society has decided. There should be work for all; each member should feel that he is a necessary part of the organization.

Two plans of organization which are advocated at the present time are the Unified Plan and the Correlated Plan. The Unified Plan calls for only one all-inclusive organization for all the young people of a particular age group, one set of officers being in charge of all the youth activities--Sunday morning, evening, week-day, and social and recreational. The Correlated Plan brings together the different young people's organizations in a Young People's Cabinet. Each organization has its own set of officers with a representative on the Cabinet. The correlation has the advantage of affording training to more young people and still avoiding unnecessary duplication among the various groups.

The Unified Plan does not have this advantage; its advantage is that it makes possible the carrying on of projects throughout the various organizations throughout the week rather than having each organization have its own project. This usually leads to a greater solidarity of the young people's group as well as greater faithfulness in attendance of all the activities. In most Mennonite churches, however, the segregation of the sexes in the Sunday School would have to be done away with before correlation would be possible.

Harner reports on a three-months' special study-project which correlated all the work of a whole congregation. He says:

"In our search for levers to raise the level of church-school work, we dare not pass by the possibilities which reside in a special study-project engaging an entire congregation with all its auxiliaries for a period of several months. The plan has so many uses, and so many values, that it may be well to note how it actually worked out in a given church. This congregation seized upon the four hundredth anniversary of the printing of the first English Bible as an occasion for centering its entire life for a season in the Book of books."¹

According to the prospectus,² the church school studied courses in "The General Content of the Bible," "How We Got Our Bible," "How to Use the Bible," and others. The Women's Missionary Society, The Men's League, the Young People's Society, and the weekly worship service all centered their study around the Bible. Some special projects during this period were giving of a congregational pageant about the development of the Bible, a book and exhibit room, and special lectures by college and seminary faculty members on the Bible once a week for twelve weeks.

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1. Harner, op. cit., p. 116.
2. See Ibid., pp. 117-118.

(3) Areas of Emphasis

Getty reports on a young people's discussion in which the purpose and program of their society was discussed. Before calling to mind that they had decided their purpose should be to develop growing Christian personality, their suggestions were very general and superficial. Then they decided that

"In order to develop growing Christian personalities, a society must provide opportunity for prayer, a closer relationship with God, better use of the Bible, more ability in deciding between right and wrong, a stronger determination to be Christian in everyday conduct, a greater concern for others, more activity in meeting the needs of other people, opportunity for fellowship with other Christians."¹

Definite plans should be made for all of the emphases mentioned above; and in order to achieve anything worthwhile these will have to be made early. Even though the details of the individual program would be decided upon later, the major emphasis of the programs of each month should be planned at least six months or even a year ahead. Some societies may prefer to use the materials planned by the national or international organization rather than working out their own plans. In any event, there should be no haphazard and hurried planning shortly before the program is announced, resulting in programs which inspire neither the program committee nor the participants and audience.

Advanced planning makes for balance in types of programs and social activities; it insures a more comprehensive program with less possibility of omitting important emphases; and it makes for greater

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1. Getty, op. cit., p. 12.

effectiveness in preparation, for materials that are needed can be procured ahead of time.

According to the reports received there is a tendency in Mennonite Christian Endeavor societies to overwork the topical, musical, and special speaker types of programs or a combination of the first two. The possibilities of the newer types--dramatization, films, slides, and others--apparently are not yet realized. There are very good and inexpensive films on the market dealing with missionary work in various lands, with religious education, the beauties of God's world, Palestinian life at the time of Christ, and many others. Dramatization appeals to children and young people and can be used very effectively.

Thus far the discussion has been concerned with the Sunday evening meeting. There are other activities of the society that must be as definitely planned as the Sunday meeting. Service should be rendered wherever possible--visits to the sick and shut-ins, letters to the absentees. Several major projects for the year should be chosen. These may develop out of studies on stewardship, missions, relief work, or church history. Books and magazines added to the library for reference in planning programs and projects would be helpful; tours of other churches and visits to their young people's meetings might be planned by the executive or special committees, conferences and conventions should have delegates representing the society, and exchange programs from other societies, whether Mennonite or otherwise, could be planned.

(4) Value in Outcomes

Phelps says that the society meetings themselves are a true indicator of the pressure behind the society--they tell the story.¹

1. See Phelps, op. cit., p. 99.

If they are infrequently held, carelessly organized, and poorly attended, it may be assumed that they have little effect on the lives of the members. The goal or aim has not been effectively reached. However, the meetings that are well attended need not necessarily accomplish the aim either. The test of the method is its accomplishment in terms of the goals and objectives set down.

c. Midweek Service

(1) Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the midweek service can be stated only in general terms here since there is little uniformity among churches along this line, and each church will have to plan its service to meet its needs. The general aim should be the same as that of the young people's society; namely, to develop Christian personality and train for Christian service. The specific aims will necessarily have to be formulated by each church.

(2) Methods and Organization

The old-time prayer meeting has lost its effectiveness in the training of youth today, for investigation shows that young people do not attend these services if conducted along the old lines. New methods must be used if the young people are to find in the midweek services the help they need for their lives. Various methods have been tried. In some churches the midweek service has been made an extension of the Sunday School session with all the classes meeting in their regular places. Where the Unified or Correlated Plan is used the Young People's Council will decide what the nature of the midweek service is to be to carry out the plan and program of the other youth activities.

The following plan used by the pastor of the Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kansas, for his work with the children is very suggestive:

" . . . The pastor has worked out a series of illustrated messages on the life of Christ. A large number of colored pictures depicting the various experiences and periods in the life of Christ have been collected and with the able help of the local photographer . . . have been made into slides which can be projected upon the screen. Also numerous pictures have been obtained illustrating the geography and customs of the land in which our Lord lived and died. These different types of slides have been arranged into a series of studies which will be presented to the children at the midweek services. . . ."¹

A summer project tried by the young people of a federated church in Masonville, New York, was a series of six "Nights of Fun" held on Wednesday evenings from 8:00 to 10:30. These combined various elements as is seen from the following plan of nightly procedure: "Games, singing, worship, a speaker or discussion groups, eats, and more games and singing."² When discussion sessions were held, the young people were divided into the older and the younger groups. Both had practical topics for discussion, the former discussing, "Conquering Yourself" and "Preparation for Marriage," and the latter, "The Worthy Use of Leisure Time." It was found that many young people who had displayed no interest in the church and some who had had no conception of Christianity became interested and joined the church as active members.

One of the Mennonite young people's groups expressed the desire for a "church night" during the week with something for all ages. Whether they had in mind a study period, a social and recreational hour, a work period, or a combination of these is not known. The suggestion of a pro-

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1. "Jottings," The Mennonite, February 20, 1945, p. 14.
2. Rich and others, op. cit., p. 56.

gram for all ages is good. There are already too many influences at work that draw the lines between old and young too distinctly and tend to separate families in their activities. The church should not be guilty of furthering this tendency.

A good suggestion comes from the plan of Howard D. Raid, pastor of the Bethel Mennonite Church, Fortuna, Missouri, as referred to by Mrs. Raid:

"We in the parsonage look forward to the times when our people come to visit us, and the times when the young people come for the weekly study class on 'Mennonite Heritage,' after which the boys work in the shop and the girls sew or sing. For through fellowshiping together in this manner we come to a better understanding of each other and the Christian Mennonite way of life."¹

This suggests the possibility of having the midweek service in the parsonage or in some other home and combining the study hour with creative projects. The Fellowship group of the two Nebraska churches mentioned previously, which combines study and service, is also a suggestion other churches might wish to follow.²

(3) Value in Outcomes

Local needs and conditions must determine the organization and plan of procedure in the midweek service. There is no virtue in planning a midweek service just to have one. Definite needs and interests should be kept in mind; definite objectives should be determined accordingly. The emphasis must ever be on what is happening or should happen in the minds and hearts of the young people who participate, for its value lies in the inner growth it produces.

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1. Mrs. H. D. Raid; "Thoughts from a Rural Parsonage," The Mennonite, May 1, 1945, p. 2.
2. See ante, pp. 60, 69-70.

As a test of the effectiveness of such a service, the following questions suggested by Sherrill are given: (1) What are the programs? (2) What are the young people doing in preparation for the programs? (3) What are the young people doing during the programs? (4) What are the programs doing to the young people? (5) What are the young people doing because of the programs?¹

d. Other Agencies

There are other agencies of the church or school that are effective in the training of youth. Some of these are the Vacation Bible Schools, week-day religious education, and Bible clubs. Vacation Bible Schools are conducted by many Mennonite churches during the ninth month of the high school term since the rural schools have only eight-month terms. Pressing farm work would hardly permit a Vacation Bible School for high school students after the close of the regular school and, therefore, this agency is hardly feasible for the rural church.

The week-day religious education class on released time is a possibility for the high school student if such a system could be effected. Some states have a law which provides for the release of students from the public school for one hour each week to receive religious instruction. Under this plan only teachers with high qualifications are acceptable.

Where the above plan is not possible, church people could ask for Bible classes to be taught by an acceptable teacher, perhaps a minister in the community, on the extra-curricular level, which high school students

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1. See Lewis Joseph Sherrill, Religious Education in the Small Church, p. 147.

might choose like any other club. In New York City Christian high school teachers have formed a club which sponsors and finances Bible clubs in a number of high schools. The movement is still new, but it may serve as another suggestion to the churches of the Western District of what can be done.

3. Social and Recreational

a. Aims and Objectives

The function of recreation is to restore or re-create that of which the activities of the day have robbed man or for which they leave no time. The very word "recreation" indicates a working with God. In spite of the fact that the attitude of many rural people is still adverse to recreation, the increasing toll of farm young people caught in the net of commercial amusements causes church leaders to begin to see the necessity of providing recreation under Christian auspices. However, they are not all agreed on the nature of the recreation, how far the church itself should go, how definitely the program should be planned or how much spontaneity should be allowed, and so on. Most of them perhaps would agree on the aims and objectives of such a program.

When Getty asked the young people's group with which he discussed the building of a young people's society program for the basic purpose of recreation and the fundamental reasons for its being included in the activities of the church, they at first gave such answers as, "To help us have a good time" and "To attract other young people to the church." But he says that by continued questioning and an occasional suggestion "the class came to the realization that recreation is intended to contribute to the development of Christian personality, and that the program should be planned with this purpose in mind."¹

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1. Getty, op. cit., p. 36.

The same group formulated the following objectives for recreation:

- "To provide a place and occasion for good fellowship.
- To provide wholesome and enjoyable recreation.
- To raise the whole level of social life to the highest Christian standard.
- To establish and develop the finest kind of relations between young men and women, and to promote comradeship on this basis.
- To overcome narrowness and snobbishness and develop wider friendships."¹

To these might be added: To provide a profitable use of leisure time and to keep recreation spontaneous and active rather than commercialized and passive.

b. Place of the Home

The place of the home in the social and recreational phase of life may be considered in two aspects: (1) the home itself as the center of recreational activities, and (2) the church providing recreation for the whole family. In the present age the church must make every effort it can to solidify family ties by providing a well-rounded program for the whole family. Roadman sounds a note of warning when he says:

"A grave danger threatens any community if recreation becomes institutionalized; if it is thought necessary to find amusement and recreation in a community institution rather than at home. . . . It is a sad commentary upon home life when children associate good times solely with going somewhere."²

How the home was made the center of recreation in one community was reported by Mrs. Hubert Bonney from Teachey's, North Carolina, at the 1939 American Country Life conference.³ The Home Demonstration and church women's groups decided to sponsor social nights in their homes to counter-

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1. Ibid., p. 37.
2. Roadman, op. cit., pp. 106-107.
3. See Williamson, op. cit., p. 23.

act or offset the opening of a roadhouse in the community. The attempt was very successful. She suggests that this sensible plan might be used by others in opening the doors of the homes before and not after trouble comes.

The sponsoring of social and recreational activities for the whole family at the church is illustrated by the play night reported by the Walton Mennonite Church.¹ Other reports found in Chapter II might be used as suggestions by some churches to further their own plans.

The following report by Robert W. Packer about the "Family Church Night" as conducted by a Baptist Church is very suggestive:

"Thursday night is 'Family Church Night,' when the church building is open for a balanced program of worship, study, recreation, and refreshments. These all add up to an evening of fine fellowship which all the members of the family, including the young people, attend and enjoy.

"We begin the evening with Bible study. . . . Very frequently the time allotted to Bible study is prolonged by the interest and questions of those present, even though it means encroachment on the recreation time.

"And the recreation time is eagerly looked forward to. Fortunately we have good facilities, with plenty of space. Shuffle-board is always popular, as also is ping-pong. And the home games, which were so much a part of family life a generation ago, are keenly enjoyed. Checkers, chess, crokinoles, dominoes, Chinese checkers, parchesi, etc., are available and constantly used. For those who wish to read, good material is on hand. Some of the ladies bring fancy work, or socks to darn. Should good old-fashioned visiting be called recreation? In any case it is a major activity each week.

"And do you remember the song fests of a generation ago around the old family organ? We have a counterpart, as young and old gather around the piano to sing. . . .

"Of course no family church night is complete without something to eat. The different families bring something simple. . . .

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1. See ante, p. 62.

"Nor should we fail to mention the devotional period. There is no set pattern, but we have something each week. . . ."¹

c. Place of the Church

"God created people with social instincts and needs. If the church does not satisfy these instincts and meet these needs in a way that is helpful, the people, especially the young people, will find them in ways that are harmful,"² says McLaughlin. Roadman would make the case for church-sponsored recreation even stronger when he says:

"The waste of human powers through lack of development is the social sin of this age. The church will be rendering large social and personal service by discovering this talent, calling it out, challenging it to the highest development, and assistance in it."³

Mention has already been made of the church's part in sponsoring recreation for the whole family under "Place of the Home." There is a growing concern evident on the part of rural leaders about what can be done to counteract the tendency of the young people to seek their amusement in nearby towns, especially on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Thus far this concern has not extended beyond reproof to correction in many Mennonite churches. Either the church has not had the courage to venture into a program of this nature or it has hesitated because of lack of leadership, or it has not awakened to its responsibility.

In considering the place of the church in the social and recreational phase of life, it should be kept in mind that it is necessary to enter this area only to the extent that local needs demand it, ever remembering that here, too, the great mission of the church is to minister to the spiritual needs of its young people.

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1. Robert W. Packer, "Family Night at Church," Town and Country Church, April, 1945, p. 1.
2. McLaughlin, The Gospel in Action, p. 116.
3. Roadman, op. cit., p. 109.

There are two aspects of the church's place in this program that will be discussed here: (1) Cooperation with community agencies and organizations, and (2) Counteracting of Destructive Influences.

(1) Cooperation with Community Agencies and Organizations

In planning its own social and recreational program, the church should go slowly, determining, first of all, what provision is being made by other recognized community agencies. Duplication and an over-abundance of activities should be avoided. If there are other agencies which the church can endorse that provide some recreation, the leaders of all these should get together to formulate aims, goals, and methods for the community and then cooperate in their programs. This is the wise thing to do; and in doing this, the church can use its influence in demanding high standards, in suggesting types of recreation, and in helping with the planning and conducting of community recreation. If the community organizations provide enough recreation, the church should cooperate rather than duplicate; but for the sake of its young people, it must keep a stake in the formulating of standards and programs even if only indirectly.

(2) Counteracting of Destructive Influences

One of the destructive influences found in modern life is the commercialization of recreation. More and more people pay for their recreation and sit passively by watching others perform for them. There is no re-creation in spending leisure time in this manner; it has become devitalized and valueless. Some non-Mennonite churches are even adopting this method by bringing in entertainments for profit, such as, carnivals and commercial films. Roadman very aptly states the curse of such a

program when he says:

"Both the spirit of play and the God-given instinct for it are debased by using recreation as a means of money-making, whether such promotion for profit is by the church or by any other institution. It is socially criminal for a young people's society to attempt to make money, no matter how worthy the project, by capitalizing or commercializing the spirit of play."¹

One of the curses of commercial recreation is its effect on the attitude toward the Lord's Day since Saturday or Sunday night is often the night chosen to attend such recreation. Another curse which the movies in particular bring with them is the change in standards. The young people are no longer satisfied with the standards maintained by the home and the church; they gradually adopt some of the standards of Hollywood.

In the counteracting of these destructive influences the churches must offer something constructive. The following examples of a variety of activities gathered from many different sources might serve as suggestions from which Mennonite churches could choose the types of activities that would fill the need and be acceptable to each local church. It is important that it be acceptable.

Little need be said about the occasional socials and picnics of the various church organizations except that in many churches they might be increased in number and diversified in nature. They seem to be acceptable to most churches.

Many churches report having fellowship suppers. These are commendable since they include all the members of the church. Less formal affairs of the same nature are the sack-lunches planned by some churches when occasionally all the members decide to bring lunches and eat together

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1. Roadman, op. cit., p. 108.

after the service, spending the afternoon in playing and visiting.

In regard to church suppers a note of warning must be given. In some churches the women's society has become so much interested in raising money for projects that even the church suppers are used thus. This runs counter to all the ideals of thrift and fellowship in which Mennonites pride themselves; for often families are asked to contribute the food and then they are expected to pay for the food they eat.

The family church night has already been discussed. This presents wonderful possibilities for Mennonite churches.

Local talent nights (formerly called "literaries" in many Mennonite communities and still continued in some school districts as community programs) have a place to fill. They are what the name implies --programs in which home talent is used.

Weekly play days have been tried in a number of communities with great success. The pastor of a non-Mennonite church in southern Indiana saw the need for a recreational program, so he announced a play day for all ages to be held in a nearby pasture on Saturday afternoon.¹ These were so popular that it was decided to have them even in the busy seasons of the year since the people felt they could get more work done the rest of the week if they played half a day. Since this program filled a definite need, it was decided to build a community house. It would not be out of the way here to mention the results. After six years of this program there were nineteen young people attending college and the university, whereas there had been none before. And these young people

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1. See Felton, Our Templed Hills, p. 69.

who associated their good times with the church were eager to become active members in it. One Easter Sunday sixty joined the church. On a Communion Sunday as many young people as adults took Communion, and two of the young men within that period decided to become ministers.

Other suggestions for social and recreational activities would include softball and basket ball clubs if the church grounds are large enough to accomodate such activities. But whatever the equipment or facilities that are provided, there must needs be certain stipulations attached--for one thing, no access to the equipment should be permitted on Sunday morning.

Many of the older church fathers and mothers still shake their heads in perplexity at the suggestion of the church's entering the social and recreational phase. Many of the fathers and mothers who have young people in the home shake their heads in perplexity because the young people must seek their amusement outside the sphere of the church at places and with associates they know nothing about. Can the church afford, for the sake of its young people, to have no part in this area which is so important to youth?

d. Value in Outcomes

It must be admitted that there are certain dangers in a church-sponsored recreational program, such as, the danger that it will overshadow the main mission of the church and that, because of its nature and appeal, it will reduce the spirituality of the church. But if the mission of the church is conceived of as winning people to Christ and then ministering to the growth of the total Christian personality and if this mission guides in the planning of all activities, including the social and recreational, the above dangers need not exist.

In the following paragraph Cain brings out the values and the principles of such a program:

"The church must not shirk its responsibility any longer. Properly directed recreation by the church will furnish golden opportunities to build into young lives the qualities of friendliness, courage, cooperation, sympathy, fairness, decision and unselfishness. Such a program will both attract and serve rural youth. In building a recreation program the needs of youth must have first consideration. . . . The program principle should not be to build up the church, but to serve rural youth. Our young people should grow up normally as Jesus did. 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.' In the recreation program, let it always be remembered that Christian standards need not and must not be compromised for a successful recreational program."¹

4. Personal Christian Living

a. Aims and Objectives

Someone has said, "Our value to God in public is what we are to him in private." That this is true no consecrated Christian leader will dispute. Therefore, since it is the aim of the church and its various organizations to train young people for service, these agencies must help the young people in the development of their private worship so that they can truly be of use in public service.

The help of the church in developing this area of the life of its youth can hardly be separated from that in the other areas, and especially worship and study. Broadly stated, the aim of the church should be, in addition to the indirect help given, to give very specific and direct suggestions to each individual personally or the group as a whole as to how to deepen and make more meaningful the personal communion with Christ. Also, it should train its young people in the ability to state the philosophy of their lives and give expression to the faith that is in them,

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1. B. H. Cain, The Church Ministering to Rural Life, pp. 69-70.

so that they not only know basically what their convictions are but that they can give a reason for them.

b. Contribution of the Church

It was noticed previously that most of the pastors in the Western District depend upon their regular teaching and preaching ministry to help the young people in their personal Christian living. If they mean by this that they offer concrete suggestions in their sermons and classes regularly, this should accomplish the church's aim in this respect. If, however, they depend upon their teaching and preaching to do this in a general way, it is doubtful whether anything is accomplished. One of the greatest contributions the church can make is to teach its young people methods of private devotions. Getty gives these specific suggestions for a young people's society, which can be used to equal advantage by the pastor or Sunday School teachers: Suggest devotional booklets, mention prayer items for the week, suggest passages to use, have a discussion on the meaning of prayer.¹

In a federated church the older young people, realizing the need for training, decided to build a course of leadership education. They began with a study of personal religious living. They assembled a library of devotional books, and each member subscribed to a devotional periodical, covenanting with each other for its daily use. Each kept a personal notebook "for a confidential listing of habits of prayer and meditation, people and things prayed about, books read, and conquests over oneself."² This would prove helpful to any group.

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1. See Getty, op. cit., p. 23.
2. Rich and others, op. cit., p. 64.

Pastoral counseling is a means of help which is neglected in most of the churches studied. Many pastors perhaps have little time for this because of having to have a "trade to earn a living" aside from their preaching. This is not as it should be, and many churches are beginning to realize that they rob themselves and the pastor by such a situation.

c. Value in Outcomes

The quotation at the beginning of this section rightly states that the personal Christian living is really basic to the total Christian life of the individual. It is this activity that should lead to a proper evaluation of the development of the physical body and of the mind, and to a recognition of the place of the spiritual in life. Cameron says:

"The inner life is far more important than the outer. In fact, the inner life is the cause of the outer. The artist's picture is within before it is seen on canvas. It is the outcome of his visions of beauty, his ideas, his conceptions, his imaginings. Our moral actions, too, are generated within. They are the expression of the decisions of the will, the desires of the heart, the longings of the soul. . . . All the issues of our conduct, our play, our friendships, our work, come from the secret fountain of the soul."¹

In continuing his discussion on discipline and growth in this area of the Christian life, Cameron stresses the value there is in the training of the Christian life in liberating the faculties from small perplexities, helping to meet the daily experiences, and leaving the energies unimpaired for fresh conquests and further progress.²

5. Service

Working out in service to others the grace which Christ has bestowed upon them has always been considered by Christians their unique

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1. W. A. Cameron, Jesus and the Rising Generation, p. 122.
2. See Ibid., p. 123.

privilege and responsibility. It seems, however, as if today the Christian church is in danger of relinquishing this ministry to secular organizations like the Red Cross, the UNRRA, public welfare agencies, and even the American Legion.

a. Aims and Objectives

The general aim of Christian education was given as the "training of young Christians for service." In it cognizance was taken of the fact that the goal is service. But service itself may be a part of the training; so that the general aim here might be stated as the training of young Christians for growth in service. The specific aims of service are:

- (1) To arouse the young people to an awareness of needs in the local church, community, and the home and foreign mission fields.
- (2) Through a recognition of these needs to create the desire to share in meeting them.
- (3) To develop intelligent, purposeful, regular, and systematic service in the giving of time and money.
- (4) To enrich the lives of the young people through self-forgetful service and thus to grow in the Christian life.
- (5) To give opportunity to express their love to Christ in service to others.

Chamberlin says that a "sense of Christian vocation should be developed."¹ But more than that "each Christian should be under constraint to assume a Christian avocation. In and through the church all talents and ability should be called to constant service."²

b. Areas of Service

The areas of service that will be discussed are (1) local church, (2) community, (3) Conference, (4) Voluntary Christian Service Program, which absorbs the Civilian Public Service and relief programs,

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1. J. Gordon Chamberlin, The Church and Its Young Adults, p. 95.
2. Ibid., p. 96.

as discussed in the preceding chapter.

(1) Service in the Local Church

"Perhaps the most urgent need of most local churches today is laymen who not only have talent and zeal but who are also willing to prepare themselves for the well-rounded leadership in the church which too often the minister alone can provide."¹

Active participation alone can arouse the interest and loyalty of young people to any cause, including the church. Young people are eager and willing to serve, but often in the past the church has failed to harness this desire in not providing avenues of service or giving priority or a monopoly on the service that was there to older leaders.

A plan which has been tried successfully by some churches and which might serve as a suggestion for Mennonite churches is to provide for representatives from the young people's groups as members on church boards and committees and as assistants to the various officers. This gives youth a voice in the decisions of the church aside from congregational meetings and trains them for the duties that will be theirs when the older members must hand down the torch to their hands. This gives youth the feeling that they are an important part of the church, the body of Christ, and not that they are the "unwanted generation."

In the Church of Jesus Christ there is a place for old and young, and they must serve together harmoniously and effectively if their work is to count the most for the Kingdom. Such a program would be welcomed with joy by many of the older generation because it would give them the assurance that when they must turn over the work into younger hands those hands will be trained and willing and devoted to the task

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1. Ibid., p. 100.

they accept. Thus alone can progress be achieved; for every generation should leave a better church to the succeeding generation than was left to it by the preceding one. Too often the church has been concerned only with maintaining the status quo, rather than with training the young people to be better deacons, trustees, Sunday School teachers and officers, presidents of missionary societies, and members in general, than the present ones are; these in turn training their young people to be better still. As Chamberlin says, "It is ever more important to build for the future than merely to control the present."¹

(2) Service in the Community

The service of the church young people in the community is one of the ways of fulfilling the Christian demand for service. The church must make the community affairs its concern rather than existing apart from its environment. Since the young people of the church are very much a part of the community in which they live, the church in fulfilling its mission should make them conscious of the needs that exist and of their responsibility to meet these needs.

Since needs differ from community to community, each church must discover the needs that exist in its particular area. In Chapter II it was discovered that some young people are active in the community, and their activity may be suggestive for others. A service which is needed in many communities is the supplying of good literature. Each church should have a library of its own and provide in the yearly budget for accretions. The Western District Conference Loan Library, North Newton,

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1. Ibid., p. 115.

Kansas, is available to all the churches. Traveling libraries can also be contacted. The benefits of such service should be made available, not only to the young people of the church, but also of the community as well if there are those who are unreached by the church. This may be the touchstone for a decision for Christ.

Friendly visits to the aged and sick, whether they are church members or not, are of immeasurable value to the visited as well as the visitor, not only during the time of the visit, but also in retrospect. Young people should be led into experiences such as these.

(5) Service in the Conference

The individual young people and their societies should continue and expand the activities in the Conference work at home and abroad.¹ The pastor, in planning the services for the year, should disclose to the young people's groups when he hopes to emphasize such Conference activities as the work of Christian education, publication, home missions, foreign missions, and relief. The society, in turn, can plan to emphasize these activities on the same Sunday at its meeting. This will help to make the young people aware of the areas of service in the Conference in which they can share. In planning the year's work, the society can also decide on definite service projects in each of these areas. The offering might be devoted to the work emphasized, "relief showers" might be planned, and a display of Conference publications might be arranged, depending upon the activity emphasized. Something has already been mentioned in regard to recognition of students when education is emphasized.² While students are recognized in the morning service, the young people might recognize

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1. See ante, pp. 70-72.
2. See ante, p. 103.

their obligation in the educational work of the Conference at their meeting in the evening.

Foreign mission projects have received considerable emphasis among the young people of most Western District Conference churches. A weak spot that was noticed in the mission services was a lack of missionary societies for the young people. The work of the Home Mission Board has failed to receive much emphasis, and it is feared that many young people have no idea as to what the work of this board is. Many worthwhile service projects could be worked out in connection with this area. One that would be especially helpful in serving the small and outlying communities is the youth caravan idea carried out by Presbyterian and Methodist young people. This is sustained on what is known as "subsistence basis." In a little leaflet published by the Presbyterian Church the work of the caravans is described as follows:

"After a week of intensive preparation in one of the training centers, a team consisting of three or four young people and a counselor sets out to serve in five different Churches, spending a full week in each. A partial statement of their aims, as defined by the caravaners themselves, indicates their high purpose:

To be enthusiastic Christians, helping others through a program of worship, study, work and play, to come into closer fellowship with Christ.

To awaken in people a greater concern for the needs of the community. . . .

To challenge people to see their Church as a part of the ecumenical Church, and to become intelligent and enthusiastic world Christians."¹

The caravaners themselves are enthusiastic about the service they can render, and the communities are grateful for such unselfish service.

The Outpost Sunday School idea might also be used here. Young people from churches with regular Sunday Schools go out to neglected areas

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1. "Westminster Fellowship in Action, Caravans and Work Conferences."

to conduct Sunday Schools there.

Stewardship teaching should find a definite place in the service program of the church. "The Lord's Acre" plan could serve as a suggestion. A plan similar to this is used by the young people of the Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church of Kitchener, Ontario, who have banded together as Stirling Crusaders, using the motto, "We Serve by Sharing." All the children and young people are grouped under captains according to their relief and mission projects. These included in 1944 the following: Busy Bees, Garden, Livestock, Poultry, Group Potato and Corn Projects. The total offering amounted to \$622.28. The account of their part in the Missionary Day observed by the church and the unique plan of their dedicatory service is thrilling and should be an incentive to other groups to try a similar venture.¹

(4) Voluntary Christian Service Program

The Civilian Public Service program discussed in Chapter II is a war-time measure, providing for the young men who cannot conscientiously go into military service the opportunity to do constructive service. Many young men as well as some young women have had the joy of devoting their lives to really worthwhile causes in service to God and man as they have borne witness to their faith.

In order to continue this Christian witness there is a movement under way which, if inaugurated, will provide the opportunity for service to Christ and the church under what is called the Voluntary Christian Service Program.² The plans, according to the outline of the program,

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1. See "Canadian Church Features Unique Project," The Mennonite, December 5, 1944, p. 9. Cf. Ibid., November 30, 1943, for report of 1943 project.
2. This plan is promoted by Willis E. Rich, North Newton, Kansas.

are big; but they are meant to be, as is seen from the statement by Daniel H. Burnham, which is quoted on the outline sheet:

"Make Not Only Little Plans

"They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will be a living thing, asserting itself with evergrowing insistency."

The plan provides for centers in seven areas--North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, Islands, and Asia; for work in seven areas--evangelization, food and clothing, education, homes, recreation, work, and hospitals and clinics; and seven ways to distribute income--current expenses of service centers, reserve for emergencies, capital outlay, news service, round-the-world broadcasts, workers' travel and education, and disability and pension plans. As will be readily seen, the plan proposes to unify and enlarge the missionary and relief activities of the church, the centers being chosen, for the most part, from those already in existence. This program aims to use a permanent staff of workers as well as qualified volunteers for two-year periods. Young people have responded in a heartening way in the past few years to the areas of service included in the program, which should encourage the church to promote a plan such as this.

Many of the young people who have rendered service in special fields while in C.P.S. will perhaps desire to continue in these fields. The establishment of a Mennonite mental hospital, which is being considered at the present time,¹ would permit this. At the same time it would provide a place for the training of other young people for this service.

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1. See ante, p. 76.

c. Value in Outcomes

Service rendered by Christian youth in the name of Christ cannot but result in a deepened and more consecrated spiritual life. That is the inward effect. The outward effect should show itself in homes that radiate the love of Christ through service, in better communities, and a greater impact of the church upon the world through the sacrificial service of hosts of young people who have caught a vision of the need together with a greater vision of the resources that are theirs to meet the need. And the church itself will reap a spiritual harvest in its own membership as well as in its wider scope as it reaches its arms across the world through its members who go forth to serve the Christ. In such a church there will be no room for strife and division and petty quarreling; there will be more important work to do which requires the united action of all.

C. Other Service of the Church to Its Youth

In the treatment of this topic in Chapter II the following areas were discussed: (1) Contact with absent members; (2) Vocational guidance; (3) Financial aid; (4) Follow-up of new members; (5) Doctrinal teaching. Another area that should be mentioned here is (6) Planning for the returning service man. All of these are extremely important, and the church cannot wash its hands of responsibility in any one of them. Since, however, most of these areas demand specialized study and treatment, detailed suggestions would hardly come within the compass of this study. Therefore, only brief reference will be made to them.

1. Contact with Absent Members

As a result of the war many churches have started publishing church letters or papers to keep the boys in the service in touch with the home church. In most churches copies are sent to all those away from home whether in the service or at work, and in some churches each home receives a copy. It is hoped that after the boys come home, contact will be maintained with all the members that are normally away. Till the war came, the church forgot about them and did nothing to maintain the bond between the church and them.

2. Vocational Guidance

The matter of vocational guidance is receiving much consideration in all circles at present, not only in church groups. It is also coming into the thinking and planning of leaders among the Mennonites, although it was noticed from the questionnaires that most of the individual churches still neglect this necessary area. J. Winfield Fretz has prepared a paper for publication, "Helping Youth Get a Vocational Start," which is very comprehensive in scope. Articles dealing with this problem have appeared in The Mennonite from time to time.¹ Perhaps much of the attention given this field is due to the anticipation of helping the returning service men; but it should not be only a temporary activity. The church can render a great service to its young people at all times by helping them in making vocational choices and beyond that in the actual entering of vocations.

3. Financial Aid

Closely allied with vocational guidance is the giving of financial aid to young people who need it, not only during the present crisis

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1. See Gordon Alderfer, "C.P.S. Demobilization," The Mennonite, Nov. 21, 1944, pp. 1-2; and Fretz, "Post-War Needs and Plans of C.P.S. Men," Ibid., April 11, 1944, pp. 4-5.

when some of the young men definitely need it, but also in normal times when many young people who desire training are prevented from getting it because of a lack of funds. Little is done in providing aid for the latter group. Plans for aiding C.P.S. men are made by the Mennonite Central Committee as is revealed by the articles mentioned above.

4. Follow-up of New Members

Often the young people who have just joined the church through baptism are lost to view as a special group the Sunday after their first Communion. Some churches continue to have special classes for this group for some time after baptism. A suggestion to consider is to make a study of church history, beginning with a thorough study of the book of The Acts and continuing with church history as a whole and denominational history down to the present, ending with a study of the home church.

In addition to the special classes it would be worthwhile to try a practice many schools follow--to assign one or two "big sisters" or "big brothers" to each of the new members, these making it a special point to help their "little sisters" or "little brothers" wherever they can. This would not only help the new members but also make for spiritual growth on the part of the older members. If done properly it would make a normal experience out of the neglected art of Christian laymen advising in spiritual matters and being spiritual friends.

5. Doctrinal Teaching

The last few years have revealed to the church the necessity of doctrinal teaching if beliefs are to become a part of life. This teaching must not demand a belief in something that is superimposed to be accepted without question. Rather it demands a grounding in the

knowledge and understanding of the principles set forth by Jesus so that the young people who desire to be his followers will make these principles their own and guide their conduct by them.

6. Planning for the Returning Service Man

The planning for the returning service men--C.P.S., non-combatant, and regular--should be done now in Mennonite churches as is done in most other churches. Because of its specialized nature this problem cannot be treated here. It has been dealt with in a number of articles in The Mennonite;¹ but, on the whole, the issue does not seem to receive the consideration it should in the light of the importance of the situation.

D. The Place of Community and Church-related Organizations

In addition to what was said in Chapter II about community organizations it should be said that the church should endorse programs and activities that have high ideals and give practical help to its members, rather than remain aloof or even take a negative attitude toward them merely because they are secular. The 4-H Club is an example of an organization which should be popular among rural Mennonite folk because of its high standards, its emphasis on thrift, and its very practical nature. Other organizations might be mentioned. A certain amount of suspicion about secular organizations is justified; but if it is carried to the point where the church and its young people are robbed of very enriching experiences because of unfounded suspicions, then it is unwarranted.

In regard to district activities let it be said that the fine

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1. See "What Shall Our Attitude Be," The Mennonite, March 28, 1944, p. 2; Henry Fransen, "How Shall Churches Help Returning Young Men to Make a Living?" Ibid., pp. 5-6; and others.

spirit of cooperation found in most churches is very commendable. It would appear, however, as if a Western District Conference young people's union would be desirable rather than having the Christian Endeavor Convention, which by rights covers only a specialized area of young people's work, be responsible for all the young people's work in the district. This union would serve in an advisory capacity, correlating the work of the various youth organizations--Christian Endeavor, Sunday School, and mission groups. Youth conferences and retreats should rightfully be sponsored by a youth organization including all areas rather than by the Christian Endeavor Convention. It should also be the work of this union to be on the alert for new areas and means of service, such as, youth caravanning, work conferences, outpost Sunday Schools, and others.

Western District Conference young people are not as aware of national and international youth movements and organizations as they should be. To know that there is a worldwide Sunday School union and a worldwide Christian Endeavor organization and that there are hosts of young people like them who are truly endeavoring to live for and serve "Christ and the Church" would be an incentive to put forth greater effort in their small spheres to carry out Christ's program.

E. The Challenge Facing the Church

A Christian must never be satisfied to remain on the same spiritual level but must with Paul say, "I press on."¹ Even so a church must never be satisfied to remain on one level but must constantly press

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1. Philipians 3:12-14.

on toward a more efficient program which will give greater glory to God and be of greater service to man. This is the challenge facing the Mennonite Church.

1. Problems Confronting Mennonite Youth

It is regretted that the young people contacted were not asked for an expression as to what they consider the greatest problem confronting them, for they are the best qualified to speak. The problems confronting the young people, as their pastors see them, are of such diversified nature that it is hard to classify them into a few definite categories. The problems mentioned most often were those dealing with the social and recreational life in one form or another. Next, in frequency of mention, were the problems contingent upon the war and the uncertainty of the future--choice of vocation, continuation of education, and the draft; and third came the problems in the spiritual realm. In analyzing the answers it became evident that many of the pastors perhaps had not looked upon their young people as having problems to face, that many of them failed to recognize specific needs and problems among the young people, and therefore, most of the answers were stated in very general terms. In fact, most of the problems were stated in terms of the church rather than in terms of the young people. Can it be that the greatest problem the young people face, unaware to themselves, is a lack of recognition of their needs on the part of the church?

The following suggestions are not intended to form a complete list of problems faced by the youth of the Mennonite churches studied, nor are the problems to be restricted only to these young people. The worthy use of leisure time is a problem faced by many young people. What shall

we do? Where can we go? What amusements can we conscientiously participate in? These are some of the questions they ask, and the answer the church gives them cannot be a mere "Thou shalt not." The church must provide more than a verbal answer to these questions.

The desire for security is another problem in the minds of youth. In what vocation will I find the greatest security for the future? Should I continue my education now, or should I get a job and earn some money first? Along what line should I specialize if I do continue my education? What can I do now to make my future secure when the war is over? Should I enter military service and renounce my convictions for the sake of the security of my own future and that of my loved ones? All of these are problems in the answering of which the church must stand by youth with advice and counsel and more substantial help if necessary.

The desire for assurance in religion is very evident at this age. It takes shape in such questions as: What can I believe? Is there power in Christianity? Is Christianity practical for daily living? On the whole, young people despise hypocrisy; and if they see that Christianity makes no difference in the lives of those who profess to be Christians, it does not make a very strong appeal to them. They need and want a vital Christian faith, one that will provide them with a standard by which to gauge all their actions and choices. Youth does not want to be coddled; it wants to be challenged, not only to the good as against the wrong, but to the best as against the good. Nowhere is there such a challenge to the highest and best as in Christianity, and nowhere is the enabling power provided to strive toward such a standard as in Christianity. This demands a force which comes from without and

yet is within the individual; the force which is found alone within the Christian gospel.

The whole of life presents a problem to youth, and the church must minister in every phase of life. The points of greatest conflict may change with the times and vary with the individual; but if young people receive the help in the church that they need to meet specific problems, they will look to the church for help as they face other specific problems. However, if the church deals only in generalities and evidences a lack of understanding for specific problems, perhaps even taking a censorious attitude when youth reveals the existence of such problems, youth will not seek help in the church. These problems, no matter how small or great, must be met constructively and sympathetically by the church if youth is to retain its faith and confidence in the church.

2. Problems Confronting Mennonite Churches in Meeting the Needs of Youth

Since this section is very closely related to the above, it was impossible not to touch upon the problems confronting the Mennonite churches in meeting the needs of their young people in the discussion on the problems confronting the young people themselves.

In tabulating the answers of the pastors to this question, a great variety was discovered as to what they feel is the church's greatest problem. Seven pastors feel that a recognition of the problem and definite knowledge of the needs of youth, together with a sympathetic attitude is the greatest problem the church faces. This is a problem of education which will be up to the leaders to take care of after they have first analyzed the needs in their particular churches.

Only five pastors feel that their greatest problem is a lack of adequate leadership. This perhaps is responsible for the failure to provide adequately for youth in many more churches. Five others feel that their greatest problem is inadequate facilities; some mention the problem of providing wholesome recreation, counteracting secular influences, effecting a deeper spiritual life in the homes, and making Christianity vital and attractive.

Many of the pastors recognize the lack of spirituality among their young people. In the light of the discussion of the preceding point this must certainly be attributed in part to the failure of the church to make the Christian faith vital and on the part of older Christians to reveal the power of this faith in their lives. Some blame, of course, attaches to the young people themselves; but no church has a right to censor its young people for a lack of spirituality as long as one vestige of blame can be attributed to the church itself. When Christianity has become such a vital force in the life of every church member, young and old, there will be no room for petty bickering, censoriousness of the young and their problems, or the conflict between the two generations, all of which are showing their ugly heads in one or more of the churches studied.

One of the pastors states the problem of the church very well when he says: "Consecrated, trained Christian leaders. Many still feel that the church is an old people's organization. Young people must be given a place in it, and the church take full responsibility for the full development of the child and life of the young people--religious, mental, social. Many churches are not willing to pay the price."

Many churches are not willing to pay the price! It is tragic that many Christian leaders still take a wholly negative attitude in regard to their youth work, as is epitomized by the statement of a pastor who considers the greatest problem of the church with its young people to be "to keep them away from other activities not fostering Christian principles of life." When will the church come to the realization that the program which Christ entrusted to his Body is a positive program, one that is so positive in its challenge and action that there is no need for many negative commands?

It is also distressing to note that there are some who feel that the church has no greater problem in meeting young people's needs than the problem of poor roads. With all due credit to those who labor under such adverse circumstances and with every wish that such situations might be remedied speedily, it would seem that there must be greater problems than this.

The great mission of the church is to minister with the life-giving Word of God, to present and represent the One who "came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."¹ With such a conception of its mission, the church cannot overlook any area of life.

In speaking of the church's attitude toward youth, Stock says that there are at least four ideas in regard to the task of the church that persist in thought and practice: "(1) To save our young people, (2) To serve the young people, (3) To use young people, (4) To share with youth the total life of the church."² Among the young people themselves he finds four groups as categorized by their attitude to

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1. John 10:10.

2. Harry Thomas Stock, Church Work with Young People, pp. 202-209.

religion and the church: "(1) The rebels, (2) The idealists, (3) The drifters, (4) The perplexed."¹ To all of these the church must minister.

It would almost seem ironical to compare the answers given by many religious leaders of the land to the question of what is their greatest problem with the answer given by a statesman, the late President of the United States. But sometimes the problem is seen clearer from a distance than in a close-up view. Three times within the last five years of his life President Franklin D. Roosevelt made virtually the same statement that he made in answering the following question, asked him by a pastor whose church was celebrating its two hundredth anniversary: "What, in your opinion, is the most fundamental need in the lives of the young people of America today?"² He said:

"No greater thing could come to our land today than a revival of the spirit of religion--a revival that would sweep through the homes of the nation and stir the hearts of men and women of all faiths to a reassertion of their belief in God and their dedication to His will for themselves and for their world. I doubt if there is any problem--social, political, or economic--that would not melt away before the fire of such a spiritual awakening."³

Therein lies the challenge for the Christian church--to revive the spirit of the Christian faith, to make Christ's will supreme, to plan for and work with the young people "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

F. Summary

In the light of the investigation of the young people's program of the General Conference Mennonite churches of the Western District made in Chapter II, it was the purpose of this chapter to offer suggestions, directly or by way of example, for the strengthening of this program.

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1. See Ibid., pp. 210-216.
2. T. Christie Innes, "President Roosevelt's Last Message" (Tract).
3. Ibid.

Aims and objectives, methods of procedure, and standards of evaluation were, therefore, suggested for the various areas of the religious education curriculum. These, of necessity, can be only suggestive since local situations and needs must in the end determine what a given church can and must do to be of greatest service.

Aside from the five areas of the curriculum, other service of the church to its young people was briefly touched upon; namely, contact with absent members, vocational guidance, financial aid, follow-up of new members, doctrinal teaching, and planning for the returning service man. Since, however, most of these require specialized study, detailed suggestions were considered outside the compass of this study.

The place of community and church-related organizations was also discussed and the suggestion made that among the young people of the Western District Conference churches there is a need for a centralized organization that will correlate the work of the various organizations now working independently. Last of all, the challenge facing the church in recognizing and meeting the needs of the young people was considered. It was found that many churches are still unaware of the fact that young people face problems, often being able to see only the problems they present to the church.

When Christ's will becomes supreme in the lives of all, old and young, and the whole program of the church is planned in the light of the positive mission the Head of the Church entrusted to the Body, then, and only then, can the church hope to approximate the fulfillment of its mission to the whole of the individual.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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What does the Mennonite Church provide for its young people to meet their needs and interests? Is what it provides adequate? What can it do to further its youth work? With these questions in mind the study of the young people's program of the General Conference Mennonite churches of the Western District was approached.

Since the Mennonite churches to which the study restricted itself are rural or predominantly so, it was thought pertinent to make a study of the young people's work of the rural church in general in order to get a basis for the evaluation of the work done in the Mennonite churches and a background for the suggestions to be offered. In this preliminary study the importance of the rural church to the home, to the community, and to the city, nation, and world was seen. The influence of the rural church was discovered to be unlimited in scope, geographically and sociologically, for many of its sons and daughters go out from its doors to enter business and the professions or Christian service in other rural areas or in the cities of the homeland or in foreign lands. The very fact that America depends for its population growth upon the rural families reveals the importance of the rural church.

The rural church possesses a number of problems peculiar to itself--isolation and distance, lack of education and adequate leadership, lack of rural-centered materials and adequate equipment, increasing secularization, and some undesirable attitudes of rural people. The

advantages that far outweigh the problems are group solidarity and the resources inherent in rural life. Present trends in the youth work of the rural church reveal that church leaders are becoming increasingly aware of rural youth and its needs, resulting in definite efforts toward a more effective and efficient program to meet these needs.

In the study of the youth work of the Mennonite churches coming within the scope of the study, attention was centered around the five areas of the Christian education curriculum--worship, study, social and recreational activities, personal Christian living, and service. The area of service, especially in the projects chosen and carried out by the Christian Endeavor Convention and its constituent groups, as well as that of individuals in specialized fields, apparently receives the greatest emphasis. Little attention is given by most of the churches to the finding and adoption of the best methods and ways of procedure in the other areas. In many churches leadership is lacking and nothing is done to train lay leaders in the various areas.

In the other services the church could render to its youth, such as, the contacting of absent members, vocational guidance, financial aid, follow-up of new members, and planning for the returning service men, it was discovered that the only point receiving more or less general emphasis is the first-named, which comes as a result of the war. Some of these areas receive the attention of leaders in the Conference, but little is done by the individual churches.

There is, of course, great variation in amount of activity among the churches of the Conference. In some churches the program is very inadequate, while in others definite attention and an important

place is given to the young people as members of the church fellowship.

A lack of participation in interdenominational and secular organizations on the part of the young people was noticed. Most of them participate in Conference or church youth activities--Christian Endeavor and Sunday School Conventions, Young People's Retreat, youth rallies and conferences, and others.

In the light of the investigation of the youth work of the rural church in general and of the Mennonite Church in particular suggestions were offered for the furtherance of the young people's program in the Mennonite churches of the Western District. This was done by formulating aims and objectives, presenting methods of procedure by way of theory and example, and suggesting values in outcomes in each of the five areas of the curriculum and its subdivisions. Since it was felt that other areas of practical help--vocational guidance and planning for the returning service men, in particular--require specialized study for adequate treatment, these were not treated in detail.

From an analysis of the problems confronting Mennonite youth, as seen from the pastor's standpoint, the conclusion was drawn that the greatest problem is found in connection with the social and recreational life of the young people, and that next in importance is the uncertainty and insecurity of the future. Whether the conclusion would have been the same had the young people themselves stated their problems is not known.

In regard to the problems the churches face in meeting the needs of the young people a great variation was discovered. Some touched upon what seems to be the greatest problem--lack of leadership and sympathetic recognition and understanding of youth with its problems.

From the study it may be concluded that there is great need among the Mennonite churches studied to make a thorough and frank investigation of their program for the young people for whose development they are responsible, with the intention of analyzing the needs and problems and finding and adopting those methods and procedures that will adequately provide for the youth of the church in their worship, study, social and recreational activities, personal Christian living, and service. To maintain the status quo and tenaciously cling to old practices is not the important thing; the important thing is to lead youth into the abundant life which Jesus came to bring.

It is a common misconception that youth are not interested in spiritual matters. Present trends and movements show that they are interested, that they respond when challenged by a vital Christianity. Too often, however, this challenge is not presented to them; or if it is presented, it is done only in word and not in life. To such a challenge youth will not respond. They must be challenged by difficult and worthwhile tasks; and they must be made to feel that the fulfillment of those tasks depends upon them.

While the church has the right to direct and organize its youth it should make use of this right, lest, in failing to do so, it lose the right. While the church has its young people, it should provide adequately for their growth and training, lest, in failing to do so, it loses them. The Mennonite Church faces a great task and a great challenge, but with the help of the One who looks upon youth and says, "Follow me, and I will make you," it can meet that challenge and fulfill its task.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I
 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRAM OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
 MENNONITE CHURCHES OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT

(Most of the questions which follow can be answered by merely placing a cross (x) in the space provided or by filling in a number or a word. Wherever a number is called for, give your estimate. Your time is precious, and this questionnaire is not to take too much of it; but promptness and frankness will be greatly appreciated.)

Approximately how many young people, ages 13 to 25, are there in your church? _____
 What percentage of these are boys? _____ What percentage of your young people (boys and girls) are now away from the home community and church? _____

WORSHIP

Do you have Sunday evening worship services (excluding C.E.) every Sunday? _____
 Every two weeks? _____ Once a month? _____ Occasionally? _____ Never? _____

Are these services designed especially for the young people of your church every Sunday? _____ Every two weeks? _____ Once a month? _____ Occasionally? _____ Never? _____

Do the young people share in these services by singing in the choir? _____ Rendering other special music? _____ Reading the Scripture? _____ Occasionally planning and conducting the entire service? _____ If the last-named, how often? _____
 _____ . In what other ways do they share? _____

STUDY

Sunday School

Approximately what per cent of your young people (ages 13 to 25) attend Sunday School--100%? _____ 75%? _____ 50%? _____ 25%? _____

How long is the Sunday School session--1½ hours? _____ 1 hour? _____ 45 minutes? _____ 30 minutes? _____

How is this time distributed? Opening service, _____ minutes; Class period, _____ minutes; Closing service, _____ minutes.

Among the teachers of the young people's classes, how many belong to each of the following groups? (Account for each teacher in both lists.)

<u>Occupation</u>		<u>Training</u>
Farmers _____	Students _____	Only grade school _____
Business men _____	High school _____	High school _____
Housewives _____	College _____	Some college _____
Teachers _____	Ministers _____	College degree _____
Grade school _____	Others _____	Bible school _____
High school _____	_____	Seminary _____
College _____	_____	Teacher Training _____
Secretaries, etc. _____	_____	Other _____

Is there any provision for teacher training courses (church or community)? _____
 If so, how many weeks during the year? _____ How many of the teachers of young people's classes avail themselves of this? _____ How many young people themselves? _____

Are teachers of the young people's classes chosen by a committee? _____ The superintendent? _____ Each class of young people? _____ From a list of nominees approved by the superintendent or a committee? _____ Otherwise? _____

Christian Endeavor

Which of the following types of C.E. groups do you have, for what ages, and how often do they meet?

Junior _____	Ages _____ to _____	How often meet? _____
Intermediate _____	Ages _____ to _____	How often meet? _____
Young People's _____	Ages _____ to _____	How often meet? _____
Senior _____	Ages _____ to _____	How often meet? _____
General _____	Ages _____ to _____	How often meet? _____

On the average, what percentage of the young people attend the group most nearly planned for the ages 13 to 25--100%? ___ 75%? ___ 50%? ___ 25%? ___ What percentage of those attending this group are older than 25--75%? ___ 50%? ___ 25%? ___ None? ___

About what percentage of the young people (100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, 0%) attend other C.E. meetings--Intermediate? ___ Senior? ___ General? ___

Do the various C.E. groups meet at the same time? ___ If not, how do they alternate? _____

Which of the following types of programs are used most frequently? (Number them 1, 2, 3 in the order of frequency of use.) Open discussion ____, Topics ____, Special speakers ____, Musical ____, Dramatic ____, Others _____

Is a part of each meeting planned definitely for worship experience? ___ Group participation, such as, Group singing? ___ Discussion? ___ Responsive Reading? ___ Sentences Prayers? ___ Others _____

Mid-week Service

Do you have a mid-week service throughout the year? ___ During the winter months? ___

At intervals? ___ At special seasons? ___

Is there a division for the young people? ___ What ages are in it? _____

How many of the young people of your church attend--100%? ___ 75%? ___ 50%? ___ 25%? ___

What method of procedure is used--Lecture? ___ Discussion? ___ Others _____

Who leads this group? (See list under Sunday School teachers: Pastor, Minister, etc.) _____

SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL

Does the church make any of the following provisions for the social and recreational life of its young people? (Fill in the number of times a year each is provided.) C.E. socials? ___ S.S. class meetings? ___ (How many young people's classes have these meetings? ___) Young people's parties? ___ Church fellowship suppers? ___ S.S. picnics or socials? ___ Others? _____

Which of the following facilities for recreation does the church have--Large lawn? ___ Large basement? ___ Picnic grounds near at hand? ___ Facilities for baseball? ___ Basketball? ___ Ping pong? ___ Others _____

Does the home play an important part in the social and recreational life as a gathering place for the young people? ___ In small groups? ___ In large groups? ___ In informal gatherings? ___ For planned parties? ___

What percentage of your young people, if any, do you estimate attend commercial amusements--Movies? ___ Bowling? ___ Roller skating? ___ Dancing? ___ Others _____

Is there competition for time between these and the young people's activities in the church? ___ If so, who are your competitors? _____

PERSONAL RELIGIOUS LIVING

From your observation of, and contact with, your young people, which three of the following, would you say, contribute most noticeably to the growth of their Christian life--Personal devotions? ___ Family devotions? ___ Group Bible study? ___ Sunday morning worship services? ___ Choir practice? ___ Reading of good literature? ___ Pastoral counseling? _____

In what way does the church try to help the young people along the line of their personal Christian living? _____

SERVICE

In which of the following areas of service do some of your young people participate--Holding of church offices, such as, ushers? _____ Serving on committees? _____ Young people's choir? _____ Participation in senior choir? _____ Men's fellowship? _____ Young people's mission group? _____ Girls' mission group? _____ Participation of girls in women's missionary group? _____ Others _____
(In the above draw a line through the ones you don't have in your church.)

Taking all of the above areas together, approximately what percentage of your young people are active in them--100%? _____ 75%? _____ 50%? _____ 25%? _____ Less? _____

In which of the following avenues of service do your young people engage--Worship services in hospitals? _____ Homes for the Aged? _____ County Homes? _____ Jails? _____ Others _____

How frequently do they serve in this capacity? _____

On the average, what proportion of your young people participate? _____

GENERAL

In which of the following community organizations do some of your young people participate--4-H clubs? _____ Future Farmers of America? _____ Boy Scouts? _____ Girl Scouts? _____ Campfire Girls? _____ Girl Reserves? _____ Hi-Y? _____

In which of the following do your young people actively participate--Western District Young People's Retreat? _____ (How many last year? _____) C.E. Convention? _____ S.S. Convention? _____ Mission and Peace Rallies? _____ County or District Conventions (Interdenominational)? _____ State Conventions? _____ Youth Conferences? _____

Is the church doing any definite service in keeping in touch with the young people away from home by publishing a church paper? _____ Church letter? _____ In helping the young people choose a vocation? _____ Prepare for the vocation chosen? _____ Aid in getting started? _____ Aid in getting a higher education? _____ Aid to C.P.S. men? _____ Planning for the returning service men, both military and C.P.S.? _____ Following up with special teaching each group of newly baptized members? _____ Special teaching in church doctrine? _____ Others _____

From your observation in counseling your young people, what would you say seems to be their greatest problem?

What, to you, seems to be the church's greatest problem in providing an adequate program to meet the needs of the young people?

APPENDIX II

DISCUSSION PROGRAM

YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK IN OUR CHURCH

Call to Worship: "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Eccl. 12:1.

Youth's Prayer

" O Christ, who didst our tasks fulfill,
Didst share the hopes of youth,
Our Teacher and our Brother still,
Now lead us into truth.

"The call is Thine; be Thou the Way
And Thine the hearts that guide;
Let wisdom broaden with the day;
Let human faith abide.

"Who learns of Thee, the truth shall find;
Who follows, wins the goal;
With rev'rence crown the earnest mind,
And speak within the soul.

"Waken the purpose high which strives,
And falling, stands again;
Confirm the will of eager lives,
To quit themselves like men."

--Louis F. Benson*

Worship in Song: "Rise Up, O Men of God," No. 230, Mennonite Hymnary

Worship in Scripture: Matthew 19:16-22, 6:33

Worship in Prayer**

Worship in the Offering: Offertory Hymn, "Savior, Thy Dying Love," No. 220

Worship in Special Music

Discussion: Young People's Work in Our Church

(Suggestion: If your group is a mixed age group, the best procedure might be to have several young people discuss in prepared topics the various items listed for discussion--worship, study, etc.--and end up with an open discussion.)

Worship in Special Music***

Closing Prayer (The words to "Just As I Am, Thine Own to Be," No. 393, might be used by the chairman for the closing prayer.)

Worship in Closing Hymn: "Give of Your Best to the Master," No. 400

Benediction

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*Taken from Louise Miller Novotny, Special Days in the Church School, The Standard Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1943.

**This prayer might be in the form of sentence prayers or directed prayer, the latter being silent prayer on the part of the audience for various items suggested by the leader with intervals of about 10 or 15 seconds between the giving of each item while the group prays for that item.

***May be omitted.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION

The Leader

- should be thoroughly prepared, so that the discussion can be kept moving and kept to the issue.
- should be one who has a sympathetic understanding of the position of the older members of the congregation as well as that of the younger ones (if there is a clash between the two viewpoints).

A Secretary and One Other Member

- should be appointed before the session to form a committee with the leader who will take note of the important conclusions reached and together summarize the session to send to me.

Conduct of the Discussion

The discussion should be approached in the spirit of sympathetic understanding and should never be allowed to go off into the destructive critical or heated argumentative. This approach, however, should not hinder the free expression of the individual members; for only as they voice their honest convictions and opinions in a sympathetic way can this discussion be of value to you and to me.

DISCUSSION

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK OF OUR CHURCH

(The following suggestions are to serve only as a guide. The leader of the discussion will have to work out his own discussion plan to meet the local situation. If the group consists of a mixed age group and topics are prepared, these should be brief, leaving time for open discussion afterwards. The best way of dividing the material for discussion into topics would be to take each of the five areas--worship, study, social and recreational, personal religious living, and service--as a separate topic.)

Introduction by the Leader: (If it is advisable, mention the purpose this discussion is to serve as per my request.)

The young people of today are the pillars of the church tomorrow. Since this is so, the period of youth should be the time of preparation to take over the duties of later life. This would serve to prepare ourselves for our future as well as to prepare us for greater service in the church and God's Kingdom. We as young people should, therefore, use all the opportunities the church presents to prepare for the tasks that will be ours, serving actively in whatever capacity we can and constantly being on the look-out for opportunities to improve, for we learn only as we do.

General

What areas are there in our church in which we as young people participate now? (For instance, worship service, S.S., C.E., special music, ushering, etc.)
In what areas could we participate but don't?

I. Worship

Sunday Morning

Is the Sunday morning worship service characterized by an atmosphere of quiet and reverence?

If so, what factors help to make it so?

If not, which of the following contribute to fail to make it so:

Our own attitude?

The environment (building, appearance, etc.)?

The type of music used?

The order of the service?

Lack of preparation on the part of the leader?

Visiting on the part of some?

Disturbances, such as, moving about, traffic outside, etc.?

Others?

Sunday Evening

(If you have regular Sunday evening service, does the same thing apply here as above?)

(If you do not have regular Sunday evening worship services, use the following.)

What values are there in having Sunday evening worship services every Sunday evening?

Would you recommend this for our church? Why? Why not?

II. Study

Sunday School

Is the Sunday School session as meaningful as it could be?
Are you motivated to go out and live out what you have learned?
If so, what makes it so?
If not, where is the problem?
 In my own attitude?
 The lesson materials?
 The method of presentation?
 The lessons' being unrelated to life?
 Lack of class discussion?
 Lack of preparation, training, or conviction on the part of the teacher?
 Lack of preparation on my own part?
 Others?
What do you feel is the strongest point in our Sunday School?

Christian Endeavor

Is the C.E. as meaningful and interesting as you think it might be?
What are the strong points?
How could it be improved?
 By a greater variety of programs? If so, what kinds do you prefer?
 By a greater variety within a single program?

Midweek Service

(If your church has a midweek service, and the young people are well represented, you might use the following.)
What are the strong points of the midweek service?
Do you have any suggestions for further strengthening?
(If the group is not well represented)
What is the problem?
 Is it unrelated to life?
 Lack of class discussion?
 Lack of preparation?
 No class specially designed for the young people?
 Interference of other activities--high school, etc.?
What improvements would you suggest?
(If your church has no midweek service, get the reaction of the group to starting one.)

III. Social and Recreational

(Have your group think of everything you have along this line: C.E. socials, S.S. picnics, church suppers, etc.)

Our Christian faith and the principles taught by Christ should permeate all of life. In what way does the church provide for a wholesome recreational and social life among the young people?

What else would you like to see done along this line that would strengthen your own Christian lives as well as the whole church?

Are the boy-girl relationships normal? Is there any hesitancy on the part of boys and girls to attend church services as couples? Why, or why not?

Have you exhausted the opportunities the church provides for this phase of your life--use of a large basement, nearness to picnic grounds, etc.?

IV. Personal Religious Living

Which of the following is helping you most in your personal Christian life?

Private Devotions?

Pastoral Counseling?

Family Devotions?

Choir Practices?

Group Bible Study?

Reading of Good Literature?

Sunday worship services?

Others?

What should the church do to increase its help in this phase?

V. Service

Which avenues of service are open to us as young people in our church or in the community? (Suggestions: ushering; serving on committees; singing in the choir; rendering special music; participating in mission bands or societies; services in hospitals, homes for the aged, county homes, jails; etc.)

Are we as young people really taking advantage of these areas of service? (Often we fail to see opportunities which are there and which would strengthen our Christian lives and the testimony of our church.)

Where could we be of greater service to the church?

Are there problems in the community that we as young people could help solve?

General

In the light of this discussion, where do you feel lies the greatest need as far as the young people's work in our church is concerned?

On the part of the young people?

On the part of the church?

APPENDIX III

Y O U N G P E O P L E ' S U N I O N
of the General Conference of the
Mennonite Church of North America

Program of Standards for Mennonite Young People's Society

Score	P	**O.S.
10		
5		
5		
3		
3		
5		
3		
5		
5		
5		
8		
5		
5		
5		
5		
10		
5		
5		
3		
100		

WORSHIP

At least one half of the members observing the Quiet Hour.
An average attendance of at least 50 per cent of the members at the regular meetings.

Every member of the Society attending worship service of the of the church once per Sunday unless unavoidably detained.

INSTRUCTION

A missionary program once every three months.

A peace program once every three months.

Subjects of study should include the following: Bible, Devotional training, Church History, Missions, Evangelism, Stewardship, Choice of a life work, Christian Citizenship, World Peace, Methods of Young People's work, Mennonite Principles, organization and enterprises of our General Conference.

Every member taking part in the meetings at least once in three months, aside from singing.

ORGANIZATION

Written enrollment of every member of the Society.

Organization in every Society having a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and at least the following committees: Program, Look Out, Missionary and Social.

SERVICE

A publicity department that keeps up a vital and immediate contact with the Editor of the "Mennonite" Young People's page, informing him of interesting activities or problems of the Society.

A contribution to the work of the Young People's Committee of the General Conference once in six months.

New Members won for the church, Young People's Society and the Sunday School.

A definite piece of service for the church, pastor, or the community each month.

At least 50 per cent of the members tithing their incomes.

Programs for shut-ins.

A definite contribution to missions.

FELLOWSHIP

At least one social gathering held each year under the direction of the Society to foster wholesome and uplifting social life.

Co-operation with other young people of our denomination.

Attendance at conventions and Retreats.

Co-operation with the interdenominational and international C.E. Movements.

* Perfect

** Our Score