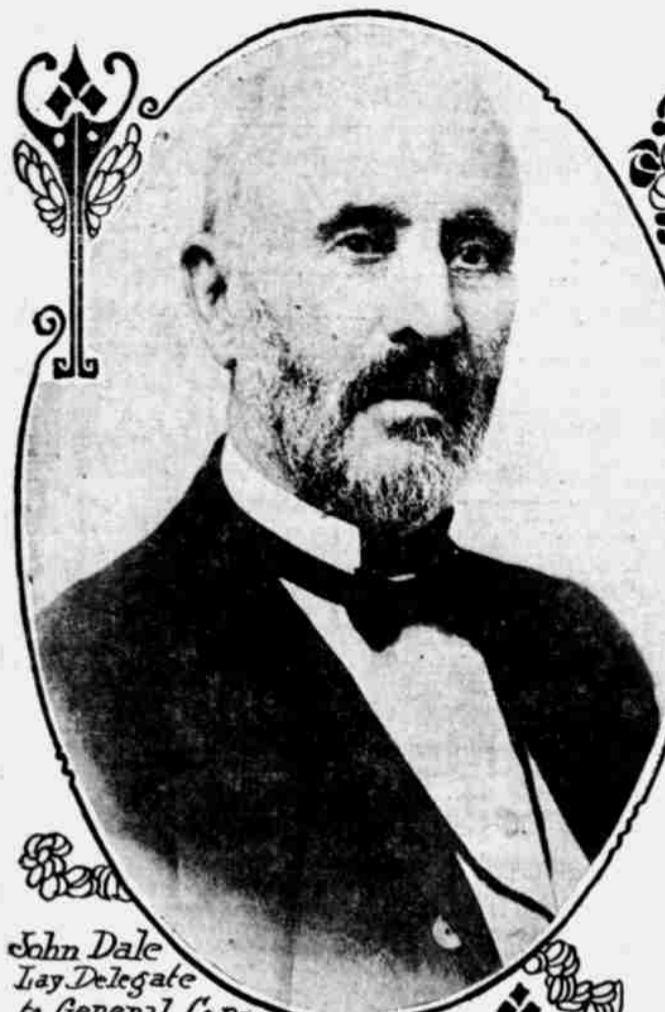
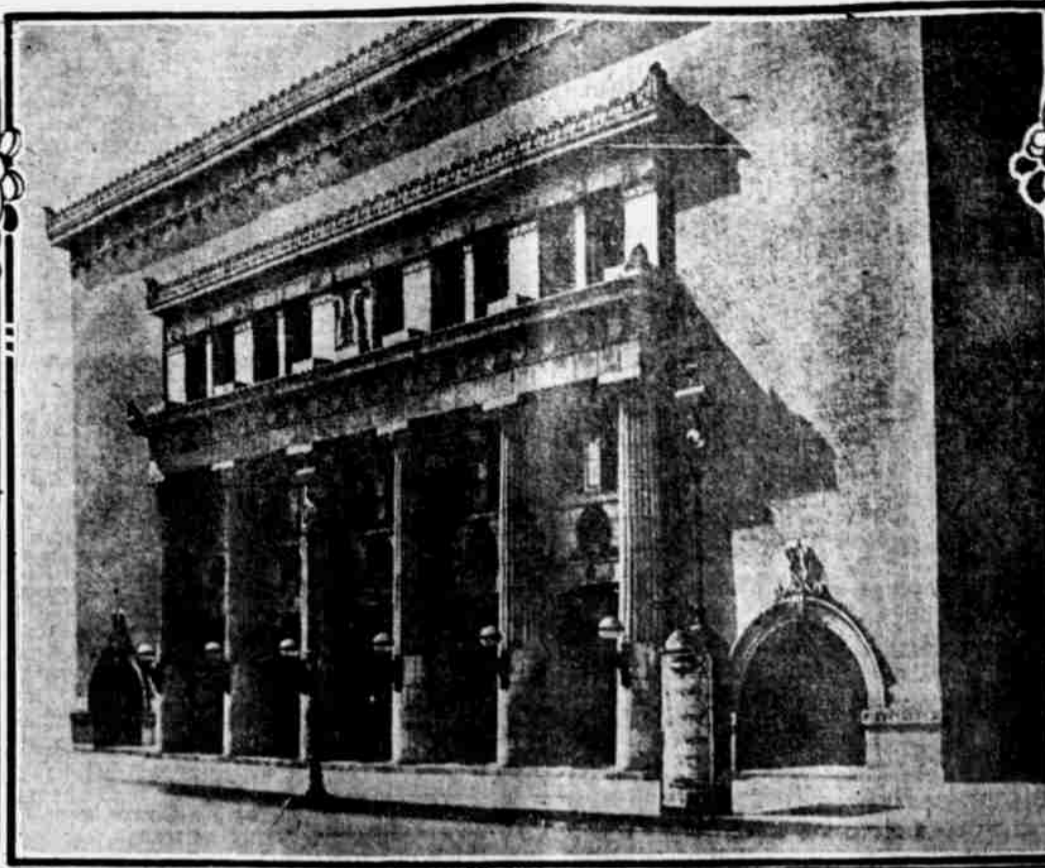


Methodist Episcopal Church and Its Work in Nebraska



John Dale
Jay Delegate
to General Con-
ference from Omaha, Nebr.



"The Auditorium"
Minneapolis, Minn. where
the General Conference
Sessions will be held.



Bishop John
L. Nuelsen,
D.D., LL.D., Resident
Bishop Methodist Ep-
iscopal Church,
Omaha, Nebr.

By REV. EDWARD HISLOP,
District Superintendent Omaha District Methodist
Episcopal Church.

ON THE first day of May there opens in Minneapolis, Minn., to continue during the entire month, the quadrennial meeting of the Methodist Episcopal church. The meeting, known as the general conference, is the law-making body for a denomination numbering approximately 4,000,000 members and adherents. It is a delegated body composed of an equal number of ministers and laymen, about 800 in all. This is a large company for deliberative purposes and efforts will be made after this year to change the basis of representation so as to reduce the size of the conference to about 500. It will be recalled by many that this conference met in Omaha in May of 1892.

Every part of the church will be represented both at home and abroad. Brown men from India, Malaysia and the Philippines will sit with black men from Africa, yellow men from China and the fair skinned Caucasian of Europe and the United States. Every profession and walk in life will be represented. Editors, farmers, merchants, lawyers, teachers, doctors, college presidents, philanthropists, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, wise and foolish—all will be gathered at this meeting. The conservative and radical will probably sit side by side. There will be elect women in the gathering, for since the quadrennial meeting of 1900 women have been allowed a seat in the conference. If elected delegates and the word "layman" in the Methodist church is interpreted to mean either man or woman.

Nebraska's Delegation

The state of Nebraska will be represented by twenty delegates, ten of them ministers and ten laymen. The ministers are: Rev. James R. Gettys, David City; Rev. N. A. Martin, University Place; Rev. R. N. Orrill, Fairbury; Rev. C. M. Shepard, Lincoln; Rev. C. N. Dawson, Omaha; Rev. William Espin, Arlington; Rev. E. T. George, Neligh; Rev. Allen Chamberlain, North Platte; Rev. J. W. Morris, Holdrege, and Rev. A. R. Julian, Gordon. The laymen are: C. A. Fulmer, chancellor Nebraska Wesleyan university, University Place; G. M. Spurlock, attorney, York; G. E. Tobey, publisher, Lincoln; R. B. Windham, attorney, Plattsmouth; John Dale, general agent Aetna Insurance company, Omaha; G. H. Gray, banker, Central City; O. O. Snyder, merchant, O'Neill; W. R. Akers, farmer, Scotts Bluff; E. A. Cook, attorney, Lexington, and S. K. Warrick, banker, Alliance.

Father in the Church

As will be seen two of the delegates, a minister and a layman, are from Omaha. John Dale is one of our well known citizens. Though past 80 years of age, he has the springy step and the buoyant air of a man of thirty. For years he has been identified with the insurance business in Omaha, coming here some thirty years ago from Kankakee, Ill. A native of England, Mr. Dale is a thoroughly reconstructed American citizen. His life is as the chapters of an open book before his fellows. A staunch Methodist from early childhood, an ordained deacon and local preacher, Mr. Dale has probably preached as many sermons as the average minister and has assisted in so many church building enterprises that he has earned the title "father of churches." Hanscom Park church, one of the largest and most prosperous Methodist churches in Omaha, was organized twenty-five years ago in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Dale. Persistently through the years Mr. Dale has guided the destinies of this body and with no little gratification has seen it come to its present size and importance. Alert and well informed on all questions pertaining to the local and general church, Mr. Dale will be a valuable representative in the general conference.

Really an Omaha Man

Rev. Charles N. Dawson, D. D., has been so long identified with the Methodist of Omaha that he is looked upon as an Omaha man. Having been pastor at old Tenth Street, now Dietz Memorial, years ago;

later Walnut Hill, then First church, South Omaha, and at Seward Street in the days when it was one of the strong and influential churches of the city. In addition to these churches in the city, Dr. Dawson has held a number of important pastorates out in the state. For several years prior to last September Dr. Dawson was the traveling field agent for the Nebraska Methodist hospital. During that time he visited every part of the state and raised a fund of over \$25,000 to enlarge the hospital building. At the opening of the Nebraska Wesleyan endowment campaign Dr. Dawson was secured by Mr. Strader, manager of the campaign, as an assistant in that work. He is serving the church in that capacity at the present time. By his genial manner and various activities through the state Dr. Dawson has made a host of friends who congratulate him on being chosen to represent the church in the important gathering at Minneapolis.

Omaha's Bishop

Bishop John L. Nuelsen, LL. D., resident bishop of the Methodist church in Omaha, though not a delegate—for the reason that bishops are not allowed to be delegates—will in a sense represent Omaha in the conference. During part of the session Bishop Nuelsen will preside over the deliberations of the body, for the bishops act in turn as presidents of the conference. It is safe to say that by none will the gavel be wielded with finer dignity or with a better understanding of the nice points of parliamentary procedure than by Bishop Nuelsen. Rev. John L. Nuelsen, LL. D., was elected to the episcopacy at the general conference in Baltimore four years ago, from a chair in a theological seminary in Berea, O. He was appointed to Omaha, where he has wrought faithfully and well. It was feared by some that being a college and theological school professor, Dr. Nuelsen would bring too much of the academic and too little of the practical into the administrative office. Such fears soon proved groundless. He has shown a masterly grasp of affairs and as an administrator has in four years made a reputation second to none on the entire board of bishops. Coupled with this his scholarship—for Bishop Nuelsen is a scholar in two languages, English and German—has brought to the Episcopal office a weight of authority and a dignity most befitting to the position. While the episcopacy of the Methodist church is peculiar, being general and not diocesan, requiring the bishops to travel widely through the connection and administer affairs in various parts of the country, Bishop Nuelsen has touched Omaha and Nebraska church life with an influential hand. It is safe to say that no resident Methodist leader has ever made himself more strongly felt in Nebraska. Whether or not Bishop Nuelsen will be returned to Omaha is uncertain. Certainly his many friends in Omaha and Nebraska desire him to return.

Organization of Conference

The real work of general conference, as in most deliberative bodies, is done in committees. There are seventeen standing committees, though for practical working purposes some of these are consolidated. The most important of these is the committee on episcopacy. It is not in literal fact the most important, but being in the public eye because of certain work it has to do, has come to be looked upon as most important. This committee receives and discusses complaints or criticisms of the bishops or their work, reviews and passes upon the character of each one. It is the duty of this committee to decide who of the bishops because of infirmities of age and other reasons are no longer able to be retained in the effective relation. If some are found of this class they are recommended to the general conference for superannuation or retirement. If retired they then no longer travel through the church, do not have, nor can they express, episcopal authority. They receive half pay for the remainder of their lives and retain the title of bishop. Sometimes because of age a bishop asks the general conference to retire or superannuate him. It is always a trying situation if the superannuating time has arrived and the man himself has not discovered it. It is rumored that several bishops will be superannuated at Minneapolis. It is also the duty of the episcopal committee to ar-



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rise at some conclusions as to how many new bishops the general conference will need to elect. At present there are fourteen active bishops in the home field and nine in the foreign. It is argued that at least twenty are needed in the home field and not less than eleven in the foreign. This would mean the election of eight new bishops provided none were retired. If three are retired, as rumored, it would mean the election of eleven all told.

Mentioned for Promotion

Some of the prominent church leaders being mentioned for the episcopacy are: Dr. Homer C. Stuntz, assistant secretary of the board of foreign missions, New York City; Dr. Henry C. Jennings of the Western Methodist Book Concern, Cincinnati, O.; Dr. David G. Downey, secretary of the board of Sunday schools, Chicago, Ill.; President W. H. Crawford, Allegheny college, Meadville, Pa., who is a brother of Dr. E. H. Crawford, pastor of Hanscom Park church, this city; President F. J. McConnell of De Pauw university, Greencastle, Ind.; Dr. Matthew S. Hughes, Pasadena, Cal.; Dr. F. D. Bevard, editor California Christian Advocate, San Francisco, Cal.; Dr. Claudius B. Spencer, editor Central Christian Advocate, Kansas City, Mo.; Dr. R. J. Cooke, book editor, New York City; Dr. Frank Mason North, New York City; Dr. W. O. Shepard, district superintendent, Chicago, Ill.; Dr. Charles Bayard Mitchell, Chicago, Ill., and Dr. Andrew Gillies, Minneapolis, Minn.

Change in Discipline

One of the questions that will be up at the general conference is the plan of episcopal supervision. At the present time no bishop of the Methodist church is restricted to any given territory, except the bishops appointed to foreign fields. A bishop's residence may be in Nebraska and he may be assigned to oversee certain work in New York state. His home may be in Chicago and much of his work scattered along the Pacific coast. This is in line with the early traditions of Methodism which established a rule that "the bishops are to

travel at large through the connection." The fathers decided that on no account should Methodism have anything approaching a diocese or a diocesan episcopacy. The arguments used chiefly in support of the tradition of the fathers, which is now a part of the constitution of the church, is that the bishops should be men of nation and world-wide range of vision. They must not be provincial or insular. To avoid such they must be bishops of all the church and not part of it.

Opposed to this, however, there has grown up an idea that for a term of years at least each bishop should be stationed and find his work in contiguous and restricted territory. This plan is known as "districting the bishops." Its advocates aver that it breaks no item of the church constitution and fits in vastly better with the work needed to be done by a bishop at this time. The question will undoubtedly be a "live wire" at the general conference and will need to be handled with no little care to avoid a "shock."

Negroes in the Church

The question of the negro in the church will be up and there are more than 300,000 of them members of the Methodist Episcopal church. For years the colored people have clamored for one of their own number to be elected a bishop. This has been refused except to elect a negro to go as a missionary bishop to Africa. A portion of the colored membership feel so deeply on the question that they have proposed to their brethren the plan of withdrawing and forming a separate church. In connection with that plan it has been suggested that all colored Methodists—for there are several branches of the colored Methodist family—shall be gathered into one great colored Methodist church, with their own bishops and leaders. The colored people are by no means agreed upon this plan. Others think that at this conference the colored members will be granted the boon of having one of their own color elected a bishop over them. Such men as President R. S. Lovinggood of Samuel Houston college, Austin, Tex., a recognized colored leader, is urging this. However, there is not much sentiment for the election of a colored bishop with full episcopal authority, so that he might preside over white conferences. Much lively discussion will ensue and possibly some very radical changes may be made, for the negro problem in the church, as in the nation, is a live one.

Amusement Question

A question that causes a stir in the church every four years because it is brought up at each conference is the so-called "amusement question." In the general conference of 1872 a drastic rule for church membership was passed, forbidding, among other things, a member "dancing, playing at games of chance, attending theaters, horse races, circuses, dancing parties or patronizing dancing schools, etc." Ever since the rule was added to the Methodist discipline there have been people in the church opposed to it. In recent years there has been a growing tendency, to the dismay of the strict disciplinarians, to disregard the rule in whole or in some particulars. So strong has grown the party that desires to see the rule removed that on every hand in the church may be heard prophecies that at the coming general conference it will go. Those who strongly advise its maintenance are prepared to make a bitter fight for the rule as it now stands. Those who want the rule abrogated urge that as the matter now

stands the church occupies a hypocritical position. Thousands of members are breaking the rule as virtual law-breakers, though never brought to trial or punishment. To enforce the rule is an impossibility at the present stage of church and secular life. They claim the emphasis in church life has entirely shifted in the last quarter century away from negations and prohibitions to positive duties and service. Believing that no more wrong will be indulged in without a rule specifying the forbidden amusements, they urge its repeal.

Basis of Opposition

On the other hand, those who contend for the rule do so largely upon the basis that to revoke it would be a step backward. They say it would seem to be throwing down the bars to every sort of amusement and would be a positive temptation to the younger members to cast aside all restraint. They admit frankly that they fear the newspaper notoriety the revoking of the law would give the church. Having been known as a church standing against so-called "worldly amusements" for so many years, the strict disciplinarians feel that to revoke such an outstanding law of the church would make the denomination "a hissing and a by-word" among the sister churches.

There are, however, among the sober-minded rank and file of the membership a not inconsiderable number that regret exceedingly the prominence given to the whole amusement matter. They feel that by so frequently bringing this question before the church it is given a prominence out of all proportion to its real importance. By being so frequently and so loudly discussed it has come to be looked upon as one of the salient features of Methodist doctrine. Many who know nothing else about the Methodist church know about the amusement rule. Because of the exploitation of this really minor matter the great truths of faith and doctrine that brought Methodism into being under the Wesleys are entirely lost sight of. To John Wesley, who was engaged in the work of building a spiritual empire, it would seem like senseless quibbling to be forever arguing whether a Methodist should or should not attend a circus.

Other Questions Arise

There are a number of other questions to come before the general conference in May, some of which may affect the church very much. A movement is on foot to give the laity a larger place in local and conference affairs, even perhaps a seat in annual conference, now composed entirely of ministers. A supreme court is advocated for the church, to pass upon matters as a final court of appeals above the general conference. Enlarging of conference boundaries and district superintendents' districts is sure to be discussed. In addition to this, before it adjourns the general conference must elect editors for some seven or eight official church papers and the Sunday school literature of the church. It must elect the heads of the various national boards such as the Board of Foreign Missions and the Board of Home Missions, Sunday schools, Freedmen's Aid Conference, Claimants, Education, etc. Various committees will be to select and the scope of their work outlined for the next four years. Thus it will be seen that the 800 or more Methodist ministers and laymen that meet in Minneapolis in May have something to engage their waking hours, while a great church awaits the results of the meeting with hopeful anticipations and some little anxiety.