

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND.

CONFERENCE ADDRESS

To the

MEMBERS AND ADHERENTS

On the occasion of the

**CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF NEW
ZEALAND METHODISM, 1922.**

Notices to Superintendent Ministers.

1. The Conference directed that all our preachers call the attention of their congregations to the following Address. *James* The President asks that this be done on Sunday, ~~May 7th.~~ Kindly see that every occupant of our pulpits on that day is supplied with a copy.
2. The Conference directed that the resolutions embodied herein be remitted to the June Quarterly Meetings for consideration, and for suitable action; that the Quarterly Meetings report to the Welfare of the Church Committee upon action taken in regard thereto; and that such Committee present a report thereupon to the next Synods and Conference.
3. A copy of this Address should be sent early to every member of the Quarterly Meeting, and a report of the action taken by the Quarterly Meeting be sent to the Rev. M. A. Rugby Pratt, 149 Tennyson St., Dunedin, as early as possible in the month of July.

CONFERENCE ADDRESS.

To the Members and Adherents of the Methodist
Church of New Zealand.

FOREWORD.

The Centenary Conference glowed with inspiration and hope. There was the beat of a new life among us—those movements of heart and mind which Christian men have ever interpreted as the stir of the Divine Spirit in the human soul. God spoke in the silence of all our hearts, and men went apart to seek alone the secret sources of spiritual power. We surveyed the opportunities that lay at the door of our New Zealand Methodism, we renewed our faith in the genius and adaptability of our beloved Church, and, inspired by the glorious wealth of her past story, we covenanted afresh, “without any known guile or reservation,” to cast the gold of life uncounted into the treasury of God.

“O that all might catch the flame!” How shall it be? How shall the fire of zeal and resolve reach every Circuit, and kindle every heart among our people? For the inspirations of the Conference will soon be lost unless they be translated into practical endeavour in the Church. Emotion must spend itself on worthy tasks, or die. Passion catches new fire when it measures itself with difficulty and antagonism. Blessing grows deeper and richer when it is shared with others. But life in which there is no striving, no sacrifice, no tireless and unselfish service, withers away.

Perhaps the most needed thing in Church work to-day is that Christian men shall really take account of the facts of life amid which Christ has set them. A fresh survey of our modern tasks, a fresh diagnosis of our spiritual defects, a fresh estimation of the forces with which we have to measure ourselves, a fresh examination of our methods and machinery—these would bring us back to reality. The discussions of Conference need to be renewed in every Circuit, and the question fully faced in every Quarterly and Leaders' Meeting as to how far the work of the Church is locally effective. It is just these matters of principle and policy that we seldom discuss with any thoroughness. The familiar question—

“ What can be done to promote the Work of God? ” provides the opportunity, but the inevitable pressure of detail steals away our time.

In issuing this Address, based upon the Report of the Welfare of the Church Committee, the Conference seeks to bring the whole thought of our Church into contact with urgent aspects of life and truth. The culture of personal religion, the call to constraining evangelism, the duty of strong offensives against the evils of our modern world, the Christian message of conciliation and guidance amid industrial and social unrest, the principles that should direct public policy, the growing hope of Christian re-union—what vistas such questions open up to Christian thinkers. With what eagerness earnest men and women should meet to discuss them and to seek the mind of Christ. The Conference urges that the whole thought of the Church shall be turned to these and kindred matters during this Centenary Year.

Let us not deceive ourselves that there is any short cut to a renewal of the Church's power over the minds of men. The conditions amid which we live, many of them so adverse to successful spiritual work, did not arise in a day. They are the product of decades, and a few hours of discussion, followed by a few flashes of earnestness, will effect nothing.

Let no man think that sudden in a minute
 All is accomplished and the work is done—
 Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it
 Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.

The times call for great patience, great wisdom, great loyalty to Christ, and to one another, great confidence in God. In such work as ours we do not watch the hands of the clock. We seek to bring our lives into line with the purposes of God. We are content to sow the seed and, if need be, pass while yet the young corn is green in the furrows. Brethren, it is a high honour to be entrusted with the welfare of Christ's Church in this day when a new world is rising before our eyes. And I am persuaded that you will think deeply upon and consider well in mutual counsel the vitally important matters which the Conference refers to you in this Address.

C. H. LAWS,
 President of the Conference.

April 7th, 1922.

DEAR BRETHREN,—

The dawn of the Second Century of the work of our Church in New Zealand finds us facing a world torn with strife and impoverished by losses. Old bonds are broken and old props shattered. On many sides the attitude to the Church is one of indifference deepening into hostility. The conditions of the people, socially, morally and spiritually constitute a challenge to the Church, and call her to searching self-analysis. We dared not ignore the challenge and have sought to discover the cause and the remedy of the ills that afflict our day. The study of existing conditions has forced us to recognise that what the world needs is not to be re-built but to be re-born, we feel the time has come for an effective application of Evangelism to the conditions of modern life; for grasping the social and racial implicates of the teaching of Jesus, and for putting His principles into practice. As we face the dawn of our second century let us pray that ours may be a Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided Church, holding true to tested essentials, quick to adapt herself to altered conditions, alive to the infinite resources of God in Christ Jesus, fired by a love-constrained enthusiasm, and glowing with such a sense of coming conquest as shall send her forward to victory.

The Conference asks that you will give your prayerful thought to the following resolutions that aim FIRST at

**STIMULATING PERSONAL RELIGION AND THE
CORPORATE WELFARE OF THE CHURCH.**

Personal Religion.

1. That our members be affectionately urged to seek a deepened Spiritual experience by such means as daily worship in the secrecy of the prayer chamber; household worship around the family altar; a religious observance of the Lord's Day and habitual participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Enduement for Service.

2. That Whit Sunday (June 4th) be observed in all our Churches as a Day of Intercession for a fresh Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Experimental Religion.

3. Recognising that the demand of the age is for reality, and that Methodism has grown out of a definite personal experience of saving grace, we call upon our people to lay added emphasis upon experimental religion, and to seek by personal effort to induce others to become sharers in a vital experience of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Church Attendance.

4. Seeing that many of our members do not attend Church with any due regularity, and convinced that the influence of a Church upon the community, the measure of its financial prosperity, the extent of its evangelistic influence and of its power in promoting the Kingdom of God are largely governed by the attendance of its people upon public worship, we recommend a

thorough and sustained intensive campaign to secure regular attendance of Church members, and then an extensive campaign to bring in the outsider.

Christian Fellowship.

5. Recognising that the Class Meeting in other days was a potent agency for fostering a spirit of fellowship amongst our people; for developing their religious capacities; for promoting corporate thinking and for inspiring to corporate effort, we recommend that fuller opportunity be given for such fellowship as the Class Meetings afforded, and for the study as well as the expression of spiritual experience.

Mid-week Meetings.

6. That regular attendance at the mid-week meeting be encouraged, and that at such meetings definite and systematic teaching be given on matters relating to Christian life and doctrine, and on the ethical and social problems of the day.

Personal Evangelism.

7. That we call our people to a renewed sense of responsibility for those who are living in our midst without the Gospel, and urge the moral obligation for every Christian to engage in personal evangelism to win others for Jesus Christ.

Aggressive Evangelism.

8. That whilst recognising that the great majority of Christians are won for discipleship through the nurture of the youth of the Church, we urge a renewed recognition of the importance of work amongst adults, and of the lofty function of the Church to make conquest of outsiders for Jesus Christ. We urge, further, an earnest endeavour to remove the prevalent misconception that Christianity is a religion of negatives and prohibitions, and to show, by imparting to our work more of challenge and adventure, that ours is a religion charged with the positive task of realising the reign of God on earth.

Evangelistic Missions.

9. That wherever possible congregational evangelistic Missions be held during the coming winter, such Missions to be conducted by the Circuit Ministers, assisted, where necessary, by neighbouring brethren, and that where practicable open-air evangelism on worthy lines be associated with the proposed Missions.

Inactive Members.

10. That whilst we rejoice in the great volume of voluntary service rendered by our members, we recognise that one source of Church inefficiency is that so large a proportion of our people are non-workers. We urge that definite effort be made to harness every Church member to some definite form of useful Christian service.

Christian Stewardship.

11. Recognising that every form of Christian enterprise is hampered by inadequate financial resources, we urge our people to practice the principle of Christian stewardship, and to give the central place in their personal expenditure to the promotion of the Kingdom of God.

The Conference asks **SECONDLY** that you will regard the social implicates of the religion of Jesus and consider these findings that aim at

PROMOTING THE EXTENSIVE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH.

We recognise that great changes are necessary to bring society within even measurable distance of the Christian ideal, and desiring to make our position clear to all classes of the community we declare that the Methodist Church stands for:—

1. The sacredness of human personality and the equal value of all men in the sight of God.
2. The affirmation that the true principle of industry is not merely competition for personal gain, but co-operation for the service of the needs of the Community.
3. The best service the worker can render, and for the condemnation as utterly un-Christian of scamped work and restricted output; as well as the condemnation for the same reason, of the practice of sweating the worker and of exploiting the consumer.
4. The principle of a wage that shall suffice to ensure the health and vigour of family life, housing conditions that will make for happiness and virtue, and the enjoyment of a fair measure of the comforts of life.
5. For such conditions in the toil of women and young people as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.
6. For a weekly day of rest, for reasonable hours of labour, adequate holiday periods, and leisure such as will ensure opportunity for the enjoyment of life and a reasonable use of the good gifts of God.
7. For constitutional methods of securing redress of grievances and of promoting industrial and social reforms.
8. For the removal of the root causes of poverty and unemployment, including vice, waste and extravagance, as well as those causes relating to the purely economic aspects of trade and education.
9. For the fact that in the message and mission of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—a message of goodwill and of brotherhood—will be found the only power for promoting effectively the reconstruction and regeneration of society. Hence we seek to secure the recognition of the Golden Rule and of the Mind of Christ, as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.

10 Recognising the need for Christian influence in the realm of ethics that deals with good government (that is in political life), and also convinced that Parliament and public bodies need moral reinforcement, we call upon our people to realise more fully the obligation of Christian citizenship to share fully in the civic and political life of the land.

The Conference considered **THIRDLY**, many aspects of service that gave promise of aiding in

FULFILLING THE WORLD-WIDE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

On two of these only need we now address you.

1. Church Union.

Realising that the Welfare of the Church in every phase of its work is vitally affected by proposals for Church Union, and recognising that internal conditions and external pressure alike emphasise the need for closer fellowship and fuller co-operation by all Christian people, we express our fullest sympathy with the widespread desire for Union.

Remembering that existing divisions are rooted in the history of the various churches, and feeling ourselves under no necessity to seek denominational salvation by merging Methodism in a larger corporation, we yet recognise that denominationalism is a challenged ideal. Hence we view the desire for Union, not from the standpoint of denominational interest, but from the larger claims of the Kingdom of God.

We feel, however, that Union is a goal that can yet only be viewed from afar—a goal that can be reached, not as the outcome of purely ecclesiastical statesmanship, but as an expression of a vital spiritual fellowship.

We express our conviction that the best and speediest path to Union is by closer association in religious activities at home and on the Mission Field; and by seeking, in the prayer chamber and at the Lord's Table where all men are equal, such a baptism of the Spirit of Jesus, as will lift Christian people above petty prejudices and pre-suppositions, and as will give to the Christ that Body which will prove to be the effective instrument through which He can save a suffering and distracted world.

2. League of Nations, etc.

We affirm our implacable hatred of war and our fullest sympathy with the objects of the League of Nations and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. We pledge our co-operation in all wisely directed movements for promoting international disarmament, and for creating such tribunals as shall peaceably adjust international differences and secure perpetual world peace.

While we hold that under due discipline, nationalism is a beneficent force, we recognise that it has often tended to foster mis-directed patriotism. We believe that above the rights of nations are the rights of mankind, and we welcome the emergence of the international spirit. We feel that when the Nations acknowledge the fundamental principle of brotherhood, and become submissive to the moral teachings of Jesus, that national discords will cease and the nations be fused by the unifying touch of Christ into a fraternity in which distinctions of race and colour will no longer exist.

CONCLUSION.

On the completion of the first century of the work of our Church in New Zealand we give thanks to God for the part we have been able to play in freeing this land from the horrors of a cruel heathenism. We rejoice in the courage, the fortitude, and the dauntless zeal of our pioneers in face of dismaying difficulties, and also in the tireless industry and unswerving loyalty of other workers, Maori and European, ministerial and lay, throughout the century. We thank God, too, for the success of the recent years, and are especially grateful for the signs of abounding vitality in the work amongst the youth of the Church to-day. For the place Methodism has attained in this country as an agency for promoting the Kingdom of God we see ground for gratitude to the Divine Head of the Church, but we recognise that it is only when our statistics are transmuted by a sympathetic imagination into the fairer currency of transformed conditions and transfigured lives that we discern what has been our contribution to the national life. On the threshold of our second century, with new visions of obligation and new opportunities for service opening before us, let us here renew our vows of consecration to the highest, and seek to be filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit as we mobilise our forces for fresh conquests in the name of our Redeemer.

