

## PASTORAL LETTER.

(Read at the Annual Business Meeting of the North Baptist Church, Jan. 9, 1903.)

DEAR SISTERS AND BRETHREN,—

Another year has finished its course. We are here as a church to gather up the history of the past year, and plan for the one upon which we are just entering.

First of all, let us gratefully acknowledge that the good hand of our God has been upon us. Truly, that hand has led us and made the year prosperous. In spite of our imperfections, sinfulness and forgetfulness, the Lord has stood by us, and to-night we shall hear reports which speak of the favor of the Lord in every department of our work. That there have been blemishes and failures, we do not deny, but we can honestly say that the Lord has crowned the labors of his own people in this church with abundant success. That the results have been all that God demands or all that they might have been had we been more devoted and active, we dare not claim; but this we say, we have abundant reason for gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ for what he has done for us during the year 1902, and great hope for the coming year that it will be freighted with much larger blessings.

As Pastor I wish to acknowledge the kindness and co-operation of the members of this church. This is one of the vital elements of success in any church. The people must uphold the Pastor's hands if victory is to rest with Israel. I believe the heart of this people is loyal to their Pastor. They believe in him, they pray for him. They speak kind words concerning him. His imperfections are not hidden from them,—no one is more conscious of them than himself, but they are not enlarged upon, and his usefulness impaired by hasty unkind, and belittling words. The Scriptures tell us that we are not to rebuke an elder; but entreat him as a father. The Pastor is not to lord it over God's heritage, but to be an example to the flock. In the New Testament Church there is no Priest except Christ. There is no distinction between clergy and laity. But the Apostle makes it very clear that those whom the churches select as Pastors have due them a certain love, respect and obedience without which success cannot crown their efforts. They are to feed the flock of God, but how can they feed them if they will not come to the feeding place. They are to have oversight of the flock, but how can they do this if the flock rebel against their leadership. The leadership of a Christian church is one of the most delicate and yet the strongest in the world. It must be willingly and not by constraint. It is a leadership of love. That makes it the strongest possible; for men will do and dare when they love. It is then of first importance to the success of a church that they love their Pastor. A wonderful love, too, rooted and grounded in our love to Jesus Christ. I believe that the North Baptist Church is truly Christian in the love, sympathy and support which she gives to her Pastor. I want to record my appreciation of the genuine love which the church has shown me ever since I came among you as an under shepherd. It has not failed in the most trying times. It has buoyed me up when otherwise I would have