

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Meeting of the Supreme Court of the Presbyterian Church in Canada—Short Sketch of the Central Presbyterian Church where the Assembly Meets—The Moderator's Sermon Some Report's that will be Presented.

Toronto, Ont., June 11th, 1890.

The General Assembly convened last night in Central Church, Toronto, the Moderator, Rev. Dr. Robertson, presiding. There was a large attendance of Commissioners and of the general public, and the Moderator's sermon was very well received. Following is a brief and interesting sketch of the church in which the Father's and brethren are in Session, with illustrations of the pastors who have occupied its pulpit, and of the Church itself.

THE CENTRAL CHURCH.

The Central Church, where the meetings of the General Assembly are being held, has an interesting history, and it occupies a site which has interesting, historical and ecclesiastical associations. The congregation is an offspring of the old Bay street church, popularly known as the Jennings' church after the pastor



REV. DAVID MITCHELL
First Pastor.

Rev. John Jennings, D.D. The history of the 'Jennings Church' is interesting. Fifty seven or fifty eight years ago, seven members and twenty-one adherents of the United Secession Church of Scotland met in a carpenter's shop in Toronto and decided to form a congregation of their sect. The outcome was that Rev. John Jennings, who had come from Scotland in 1838, was inducted pastor on the 9th of July, 1839. The congregation, for a time, met and worshipped in the Stanley street Baptist chapel, then in the Methodist Episcopal chapel, Richmond street, first renting, and then in 1841 purchasing it. In 1843 it was found to be too small for the congregation and a new church was erected on the corner of Richmond and Bay streets, with an accommodation for 900 persons, and at a cost of about £3,000. A severe storm in the early sixties, blew down one of the pinnacles at the south east corner of the church, which descended through the roof. In its flight downwards, "the stone detached a piece of wood with a nail in it, which also fell, the nail piercing a New Testament in one of the gallery pews, and punctured the book through the text: Mark vii. 25, "And the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock." Dr. Jennings resigned the pastorate in 1874, and the difficulty experienced in agreeing upon a successor was the cause, or one of the causes of the formation of the Central church. A number of the old congregation favored Rev. John Smith, then of Rowmanville, and others favored Rev. David Mitchell. Both sections had their choice, the Smithites



Rev. P. McF. McLeon.

forming Erskine Church and the Mitchellites the Central, the latter having been organized in 1875, and the present church erected in 1876.

On the site of the Central Church once stood the vice-regal residence of Lord Elgin, Governor of Upper Canada, whose removal from Montreal to Toronto was caused by the riot resulting in the burning of the Parliament Buildings at Montreal in 1849. The seat of Government was fixed at Toronto and Quebec alternately, four years in each place. The vice-regal residence was known as Elmsley Villa after the name of its first owner, Capt. John Elmsley. It was subsequently occupied as Knox College and continued to be used as such until the College took up its quarters in the present building on Spadina Avenue. The first pastor of the Central Church as has been stated was the Rev. David Mitchell now of Jersey City, N. Y., and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed for the first time on the 1st August 1875 when fifty two members sat down at the Lords Table.



REV. DR. MCTAVISH, D.Sc.

Mr. Mitchell was succeeded in the pastorate by Rev. P. McF. McLeon June 29th, 1880. At that time there was a membership role of 202. The total income was \$5714, of which \$344 were given to Missions.

The present pastor, Rev. D. McTavish, D. Sc., was inducted on the 9th. of August 1888. There were then 432 members on the roll, and of the total income of \$8963, \$2721 were given to Missionary Work. At the close of 1895 the membership was 641, the total income \$12,702, of which over \$4600 were given to missionary and benevolent objects. The Congregation pays the salary of a missionary in India and also the required amount for a Home missionary in the North West, besides supporting and carrying on a domestic mission in the city.

The Moderator's Sermon.

TEXT.—"But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts i. 8.

These words form the theme of which the Book of the Acts is the expansion and illustration, they constitute the charter under which according to Luke the New Testament Church was instituted. To qualify the Apostles for their mission they were to be endued with power from on high, this was the promise of the Father and they were to wait in Jerusalem for its fulfilment. They were commissioned to be witnesses for Christ. With the facts of His life, with His teaching and miracles, with His death and resurrection they were familiar and of these they were to testify. Their field was the world—from Jerusalem unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The commission was given to the Apostles in a representative rather than in a personal capacity; for, on the day of Pentecost, not the twelve, nor even the one hundred and twenty residing in Jerusalem, but all who were present when the Spirit descended were filled with the Holy Ghost; and others participated in the miraculous gift at subsequent times. The Church of every age and country, therefore, was represented when the Apostles were commissioned; and our interest in the commission, whether as a branch of the Church Catholic, or as individuals is not speculative but practical, not historic but personal. Nor should it be forgotten that the power of the Spirit is as necessary to-day as at the beginning, nor that the promise of the Father is to us as well as to the Apostles. There is nothing the Church of Christ needs more than power.

The prominence given to Jerusalem and the regions round about is natural and suggestive, but it is not intended to magnify unduly the importance of any department of work or any portion of the field. The field is one, and the work one, and the Lord makes the whole Church responsible for its success. The only question that can arise is, how any branch of the Church of Christ can employ its resources in men and means to the best advantage