

membership comes from the Sunday School. Therefore, more than five times as many pupils go through the Sunday School as become members of the church. Or, for every one who becomes a member of the church, nearly six pass out into the world and are lost to the church. Or, a teacher who has a class of six pupils may, if she has average success, save one for the church. Or, in a School of one hundred it takes nearly six hundred pupils passing through the School to keep up 85 per cent. of the church's strength in membership. The waste is simply appalling."



### The Sunday School Institute

*By Rev. Henry Dickie, D.D.*

One of the best plans yet devised, to reach and help our Sunday Schools in organizing and developing their work, that it may become more up-to-date and efficient, is the Sunday School Institute, which is a gathering of picked people rather than a promiscuous assembly.

There are at least four factors necessary to the success of a School within the local church, namely: a minister who is the pastor of his church School; a superintendent with an educational ideal; a body of growing teachers; and a church membership and community in sympathy with the ideals of the modern church School.

Now, the Sunday School Institute aims to help the School by gathering together these essential factors, and instructing and inspiring them in the spirit, methods and matter of Sunday School work. Herein lies the noticeable difference between the old-fashioned Sunday School Convention and the modern Institute. The former was largely for teachers and religious people generally, and the work attempted was mainly inspirational. The latter calls for representatives from the home, the church, the day school and the community, as well as from the Sunday School, knowing that only through the co-operation of all these factors can we attain our goal, and the work attempted is educational rather than inspirational,—“the furnishing of workers with principles, view-point and ideals, rather than mere practical pointers” is the way in which it has been succinctly described.

Since it would be impossible to cover every phase of Sunday School work in one Institute of two sessions, our S.S. and Y.P.S. Board has adopted the plan of stressing one or two things each year. Last year, for example, educational evangelism was emphasized. This year two subjects are made prominent, namely: a complete curriculum of education and training for leadership. Next year spe-

cial attention will be given to the home. In this way, through a change of subjects and speakers, an Institute may be held in the same centre every year, and continue to secure a varied and progressive interest.

The aim or purpose of the Institute necessarily determines largely the manner of conducting it. Seeing that it aims primarily at instruction, room must be given on its programme for informational addresses. “Not only to keep workers in touch with the plans and programmes of our own church, but to bring to the attention of our people all the latest and best in religious education,” is the way in which our Board’s little pamphlet on the subject expresses the aim.

This calls, manifestly, for the well-informed speaker, and fortunately a number of these are now to be found in every Synod of our church, and Presbyteries, in planning Institutes, should avail themselves of their help. One such expert, with the capable assistance to be had in every Presbytery from ministers and lay workers, will furnish all that is necessary for any Institute programme.

Discussion, however, should follow these informational addresses, and if a few persons are chosen in advance to open the discussion, the ice will quickly be broken, and the feeling engendered that it is free for all to participate in. But here, perhaps, is where the finest work is done.

Getting the experience of others is their working out of new plans and programmes brings more help to many delegates, than the address itself.

A third thing not to be overlooked is conference,—something that will call for a place on the programme the moment you realize that in this gathering there are representatives of all the religious education factors in the church and the community. A round table conference, defining and discussing the work expected of every group represented, and how it can best be coordinated in the interests of the common task, will go far to bring home to all the absolute necessity of cooperation, and lead to the development of local leaders acquainted with the broad scope and tremendous value of this work.

The Book and Church Publications Exhibits, which are brought to the attention of the delegates in a short talk at the close of the supper provided by the church in which the Institute is held, have great practical value. In this way you can sow the whole Presbytery with the finest religious education seed, and there is no telling how great the harvest in the way of better methods and work may be.

The evening meeting should always have a good deal of the inspirational in it, because it will be attended by many, outside of the regular delegates, from the church and com-