

THE BAPTISTS.

Opening of the F. C. Conference at Sussex Saturday.

Rev. Dr. McLeod Presents an Interesting Report on the Condition of the Church.

Delegates from Maine and United States Conferences Present Greetings.

(Staff Correspondence of the Sun.)

SUSSEX, Oct. 1.—The Free Baptist General Conference of New Brunswick assembled in annual session with the Free Baptist church in Sussex this afternoon at 2.30 p. m., the moderator, Rev. Gideon Swin, in the chair. The hymn, "Nearer My God to Thee," was sung, followed by the reading of Psalm XIII. and prayer by the Rev. J. T. Parsons. The roll call was liberally responded to, a very full delegation being present from the several districts of the province. The delegates, with local church members, filled the body of the edifice.

D. McLeod, recording secretary; James Patterson, treasurer; E. W. Sipp, treasurer; F. M. Crockett, secretary; J. W. McCready, corresponding secretary for Sabbath schools; and Hon. Geo. E. Foster also answered to the call.

There were likewise present Dr. Chase, president of Bates college, Lewiston, Maine; and H. S. Myers, of Hillsdale, Michigan, general secretary of the F. C. Baptist Young People's Societies of the United States.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Rev. Dr. McLeod read a lengthy report, of which the following is an abstract:

The enrollment of churches last year was one hundred and fifty-five. The number of churches reported to their respective district meetings this year is one hundred and twenty, being two more than reported last year.

Last year one hundred and eighteen churches reported 9,189 members; this year one hundred and twenty churches report 9,594 members. The estimated unreported membership last year was 2,790, giving a total membership of 11,979. The estimated unreported membership this year is 2,638, making a total membership now of 12,232, an increase of 253 members, or 2.14 per cent.

Of the one hundred and twenty reported churches, one hundred and ten have pastoral care during the year.

Twenty-six churches report revival. The number added to them is 3,194 by baptism, 251 by letter, 85 the net increase being 3,426.

During the year four new church buildings have been completed and dedicated—one at Kingsley, York Co., dedicated Oct. 17th, 1897; one at Bloomfield, York Co., dedicated June 12th, 1898; one at Victoria, C. Co., dedicated June 26th, 1898; and one at Waasla, dedicated Sept. 13th, 1898.

Two new parsonages have been added, one at Sussex and one at Ellsworth. The number of parsonages in the conference increased to thirty.

The money raised for all purposes as reported by one hundred and twenty churches amounted to \$36,186.65.

The total contributions reported are \$2,770.83 less than last year. The chief falling off is in the amount paid for church building and improvements—the decrease in this item being \$3,449.97. There is a slight increase (234.49) in the salaries paid; a small increase, also, in the contributions to home and foreign missions; and a slight falling off in the conference fund.

Forty-three churches report all their resident members contributing to the support of church work; and twenty-eight churches report a considerable percentage of their members not contributing—the percentage varying from 10 per cent. to 75 per cent.

MINISTERS.

The number of ordained ministers on the conference roll is the same as last year—43. Of these, thirty-two have been engaged in pastoral work during the year. Of those not engaged in pastoral work, five (Revs. J. H. Erb, A. H. McLeod, W. R. Roud, C. F. Riddout and F. A. Currier) are out of the province; four (Revs. T. Connor, T. W. Carpenter, J. S. Jones and L. A. Cosman) are prevented by age or health from engaging in active work; one is the pastor of an denominational church, and one, Rev. J. S. Noble—the senior minister, has been a general missionary, independent of appointment or salary, and has during the year visited a large number of churches in various parts of the field, and has, also, attended all the district meetings of the year.

At the beginning of the year there were five conferences and three district meetings. Three have been added to the latter class during the year—two (W. Kirkpatrick) by the fourth district, and two (T. Patterson and M. L. Greig) by the sixth district. The conference locations not mentioned above as pastors are S. J. Chase, who is still teaching in a Free Baptist school at New Hampton, N. H.; and F. S. Hestley, who, having been called to the Yarmouth, N. S., church, was dismissed by the conference executive, and was ordained by the Nova Scotia conference in September. The district pastors are A. D. Paul, who has been in Maine, but will take up work in the home field this month, and T. Patterson and W. Kirkpatrick, who are at school.

MINISTERIAL REPORTS.

Following are summaries of their reports:

Rev. John Perry reports that he has been busy all year. Preached every other Sunday at Wicklow. The cause is low there.

Rev. G. A. Hartley, D. D., has spent the year away from his old charge. His health has been good enough to enable

him to preach every Sunday in the year. In July celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his pastorate, the church marking the event by paying off the balance of its mortgage liability. The outlook is rather encouraging.

Rev. J. N. Barnes reports "the condition of the church is much improved."

Rev. T. S. VanWart has, as last year, had the pastoral care of Millville, Upper Hainesville and Staples Settlement churches. The interest in the field is "mushy" as at last year.

Rev. T. O. DeWitt has had the care of Rusazornia, Waasla, Lincoln, Oromocto, French Lake, Waterville, Victoria and Geary. The last mentioned three do not belong to the pastorate, but were looked after by Bro. DeWitt because no other care was provided for them. He held special meetings at Waterville and Victoria, and seven were baptized and eight received into the church.

Rev. E. B. Gray reports "the cause low generally; yet they have some good meetings."

Rev. C. T. Phillips continues pastor at Woodstock. "The year has been an ordinary one."

Rev. J. W. Clarke is "heating the stove of his seventh year as pastor of the Waterloo street church, St. John. In matters spiritual, financial and congregational there has been improvement. The young people are doing well."

Rev. J. J. Barnes has been pastor of Coldwaterville and Mount Pleasant churches. "Considerable special work has been done. Seventeen were baptized and added to the churches." Bro. Barnes will take charge of Waterville pastorate after conference.

Rev. G. W. Fowler has been pastor of "Central Hampstead, Hibernia and Jerusalem churches, with a service every other Sabbath at Hampstead Village Hall and at Otnabog school house. The meetings in every part of the field have been well attended."

Rev. B. H. Nobles says the work on his pastorate has been "very similar to that of last year."

Rev. W. H. Perry spent the year with the Grand Manan churches—his fifth year. "There has been no special revival. The church, though in a healthy condition and free of debt, Grand Harbor church is reducing its debt. North Head is struggling on. This has been a hard year for the few faithful ones who maintain the cause."

Rev. C. E. Lewis has ministered to five churches, Wickham's, Bald Hill, Shannon, Henderson, and Big Cove. He has "preached three times each Sabbath, and generally, attended four conferences each month."

Rev. F. C. Hartley has "continued pastor of Fredericton. Twenty-eight have been baptized, and thirty-five added to the church. As a whole the church work may be said to be in a fairly satisfactory condition."

Rev. H. A. Bonnell has been pastor at Brown's Past, Westfield, Oak Point, Hamilton Mountain, Teaman's Cove and Belleisle Bay churches. There was a revival at Belleisle Bay, where seven were baptized, and at Westfield church. The cause seems low in the other churches.

Rev. D. Long, pastor of Victoria street church, St. John, reports "an advance in all departments of the church work. Financial progress has been made. Spiritually the condition is not so good as it should be."

Rev. Abram Perry has spent the year with the Salisbury group of churches, which includes Steeves Mountain, Coverdale, Eagle Settlement, Lewis Mountain, Wheaton Settlement and Steeves Settlement. He has done "the regular pastoral work in all the churches, and held special meetings with the Eagle Settlement and Steeves Settlement churches."

The congregations at preaching services were increased; the prayer meetings are better and there is more interest in Sunday school work. He has baptized forty during the year.

"The religious condition of the field is not so good as is desirable, but it is the best it has been since he became pastor."

Rev. J. B. Daggett has had charge of "Upper Brighton, Hibernia, Lower Brighton, Haysbrook, Newburg and Pembroke churches. The spiritual life of the churches is good."

Rev. E. S. Parker, pastor of the Moncton church, reports "the average congregation has been better than last year. The church has more money for the pastor than for many years, also for improvements, etc."

Rev. W. C. Kierstead has had pastoral care of Gibson, and during part of the year of Kingsley also. In both churches the interest has been increasing and both are progressing. Their spiritual life is good.

Licentiate Greig "labored with the Deer Island churches from last conference till Christmas."

Licentiate Stirling has been in charge of the Lower Queensbury, Deer Island, Lower Penne, Wallant and Dumfries churches. "The churches are doing very well; Dumfries is small, only five families of our faith." He thinks "the pastorate cannot support a pastor another year without help from the H. B. Board."

Licentiate Puddington has spent the year with the churches on the Tobique river, making some visits to Perth Valley church. He reports the churches "helped." "It has been a year of blessing."

ENCOURAGEMENTS, ETC.

Examination of the foregoing figures and other facts reveal encouraging things. Some of them may be stated thus: Two more churches reported than last year. There is an increase of \$5 in the reported membership. Four new church buildings and two parsonages have been erected. The additions by baptism are seventy-six more than last year. The average attendance at prayer meetings and conferences is somewhat increased. Thirty-nine churches report gain in spiritual life and Christian activities. Forty-three churches report that all their resident members contribute to the support of the work. Twenty-eight churches are increasing in their support of Christian work. Seven more churches contributed to home missions than last year. The salaries of pastors have been slightly increased.

Besides these, there are doubtless many things of an encouraging character in the life and work of the churches which have not been given in their reports. Many of the best things are often difficult to tabulate.

But, while rejoicing in signs of prosperity, the conference should not fail to note such things as these: Forty-three of the reported churches did not have the Lord's Supper administered during the year.

There were no addition to eighty-four of the reported churches.

Only ten churches mention a missionary prayer meeting, and in sixty-nine churches no missionary sermon was preached.

The per capita contribution for all purposes is less than it was a year ago.

Less than one-fourth of the resident members attend the mid-week prayer meeting; and less than one-third the monthly conference.

Fifty-three churches report no gain in spiritual life and no increase of Christian activity; and twenty-eight report loss in these respects.

Forty-three of the reported churches, with 3,241 resident members, did not this year contribute to home missions; seventy churches with 3,083 resident members, did not contribute to foreign missions; sixty-six churches, with 1,845 resident members, failed to contribute to the conference fund; and not a single church contributed anything to the fund for the relief of sick and disabled ministers, nor to the ministerial students' aid fund.

SUGGESTIONS.

Your corresponding secretary makes these suggestions:

1. The financial statement in this report, while as complete as could be made, leaves the impression that have come to the hands of the secretary is not a full showing of the contributions of the churches. Some churches have not made returns, others had not made their contributions to missions, conference fund, etc., when they reported to their respective district meetings. It is long as any number of churches fail to make full reports, this report will be incomplete, and its exhibit be less creditable to the body than it might be. It is respectfully suggested that every church endeavor to make its report in their respective district meetings, and every fact about its work.

2. The non-resident members of the churches are not all out of the country. Many of them, perhaps a majority, are in the cities and towns of the province. They are not, as a rule, in a position to keep in touch with their churches. It is suggested that they be fairly easy to look after. But, whether in the country or out of it, it is certainly the duty of churches to endeavor to exercise care towards their absent members. The reports show that on eight churches, with a total membership of 1,000, there were only 100 non-resident members. The Water-erloo street, St. John, church "inquires occasionally"; and the Carleton St. John, church says it has "no systematic method, but the pastor corresponds with the absent members." (Rev. A. J. Prosser, pastor) has sought to reach his non-residents "by letters," and reports that "with few exceptions, all responded, either by letter or in person." The five churches of Rev. Abraham Perry's pastorate have endeavored to reach their non-residents, and in some cases "with satisfactory results." The care of all their members, so far as possible, is, surely, the duty of the churches. It would, probably, have a good effect if the conference would recommend to the churches in this matter.

3. As churches too easily give up absent members, so district meetings seem to too easily give up churches. A district meeting sometimes says of a church "it has not reported"; or, "three or more years, it must be dead. It might as well be struck off the roll." To be careful, not cast out, is what is needed in such cases. Conference might advise the district meetings in this matter.

4. There are churches which are not making progress; they are scarcely holding their own. Their condition is a demand on the body of which they are members. They must be cared for. Their life depends on our care of them; so do we care for them? We are not here to indicate lack of true spiritual life.

Among the churches that need special attention are (1) the thirty-five which have not reported; (2) the thirty-two which have reported, but are doing nothing for home missions, the thirty-six which paid nothing into the conference fund, and one hundred and twenty which made no contribution to the missions fund; and (3) those churches which report either no "gain or actual loss in spiritual life and Christian activities."

5. Larger undertakings in home missions need strengthening and new ground should be occupied. We are quite able to do this work. We cannot afford to neglect it.

Not less, but more, should be done for the promotion of God's work in the dark parts of the earth. God's call to His poor people to go everywhere with the gospel must always be heard by us and obeyed. Better care of languishing home interests will develop more ability to do more for those in "the regions beyond."

6. A survey of the field must impress the thoughtful Christian that there is need of a wide-spread spiritual revival. Are we being caught in the world-war draft? It is worth while to ask. If we are, we are back to the simplicity, the singleness of purpose, the consecration, the self-sacrificing spirit, the abounding service, the sturdy faithfulness, the walking with God which characterized the fathers—back to God, the enjoyment of power, the joy of the Holy Ghost.

D. McLeod Vince, who had been a member of conference for 26 years, in moving the adoption of the report, said that he took heart over the past year's record. Three-quarters of the ministers had been employed, 355 people added to the churches, 1,000 churches and two parsonages built, and ten new churches established.

Four-fifths of the reported churches had held mid-week prayer meetings and the prayer meeting was the life of the church. He endorsed the suggestion to look carefully after non-resident members. This was the age of systems, and the F. C. Baptists sadly needed more system. The contributing members had given \$4 a year per head; more, it was true, than years ago, but it ought to be raised to \$6 or \$8. The contributions to the home mission field should be materially increased. But, all the systems and all the contributions would be as nought unless they consecrated their lives to God.

Rev. C. T. Phillips, in seconding the motion to adopt the report, hoped that when it came up in the regular way there would be time for discussion of its six important recommendations. He regarded the "non-resident members" matter as one worthy of careful consideration. There is nothing in a letter-writer, who does not dictate the letters. Here was a field for the young people's societies to look after, that great percentage who had gone to Boston to enrich Methodist and Presbyterian churches because they had not been followed by their respective churches. This was a field for the young people's societies to look after, that great percentage who had gone to Boston to enrich Methodist and Presbyterian churches because they had not been followed by their respective churches. This was a field for the young people's societies to look after, that great percentage who had gone to Boston to enrich Methodist and Presbyterian churches because they had not been followed by their respective churches.

Hon. Geo. E. Foster, in supporting the motion in response to invitation of the chair, said there was no need to add words of commendation to those of the mover and seconder, nor was it wise to criticize what had been said. He was glad to be present with conference one more, and to meet so many old friends and hear the same old voices. He noted with regret the absence of some faces present five years ago, and felt that the responsibilities were now falling on younger shoulders. As Major Vince had just said, the F. C. Baptist movement was a protest against formality and system as opposed to spirituality. At this period it was a great thing for us to look back at the methods of the fathers—the God-given methods he called them. In the regular way conference one more, and to meet so many old friends and hear the same old voices. He noted with regret the absence of some faces present five years ago, and felt that the responsibilities were now falling on younger shoulders. 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