

BOOK TWO

"THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE"

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BOOK TWO

I. LITTLE TROPICAL AMERICA

Construction Era Conditions

It was on May 1, 1904 that the United States government took possession of the Canal Zone. In terms of changes brought by intervening years that is a long time ago.

In the religious life of that era each of hundreds of sects, like Kipling's cat, walked its wild lone with scarcely a qualm of conscience concerning Christian cooperation. Meanwhile, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America was but a dream child, born four years later.

In national life none had seriously imagined the United States as a world power. Its population was less than half its present total while the westward flow of ox-drawn caravans remained a sizable trickle. The Alaskan Border dispute was in the process of settlement. Child labor laws were at last being taken seriously, while Maryland had enacted the first workmen's compensation law. Woman's suffrage sentiment had pyramided into a certainty and Carrie Nation was wielding her emphatic hatchet. Alfred Tennyson had been dead but a decade and "Mark Twain" still had six years of his brilliant life ahead. Something of price levels may be indicated by the retailing of sugar at four cents per pound and tea at 25c, while men's woolen suits were \$10 each.

The international scene revealed Russia and Japan at war, with the Boer war a very fresh memory. The abolition of serfdom in Russia was eight years ahead as was the founding of China's first Republic.

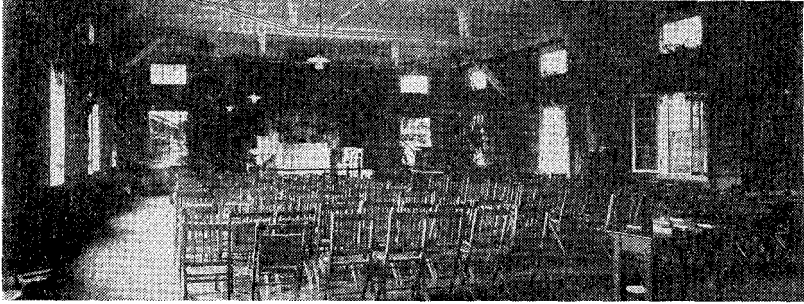
Perhaps the most amazing evidence of change during the first half of our turbulent century lies in the world of gadgets. In 1904 New York got its first subway ride but waited eight years to exhibit to a gawking world the now dwarfed Woolworth tower. When men and machines were first unloaded at Colon to take over where the French had left off, the Ford Motor

Company was a year old, yet it was increasingly common for faithful old Dobbyn to be scared out of his wits by the irregular chug chug of a mechanical marvel and architectural monstrosity that was destined soon to consign him and his dirt roads to oblivion. In Dayton, Ohio two young "impractical idealists were wasting their time," seeking to defy the law of gravity. Guglielmo Marconi had just succeeded in coaxing sound to ride ether waves from one shore of the Atlantic to the other. Edwin S. Porter, chief cameraman of the Edison studio, had fired the imagination of the world, not to mention several keen competitors, by producing *The Great Train Robbery*, the motion picture screen's first genuine play.

Despite all the technological advances that have been made since the Panama Canal was engineered a half century ago, it remains the world's largest canal, and one of the most modern. That fact is a great tribute to the builders of the world's most widely known engineering project. Legion were the problems that confronted them and there were but few patterns to follow. First there was the chore of establishing the precise evaluation of the assets purchased from the French Canal Company. The tropical diseases which had contributed largely to the failure of the French, had to be prevented by scientific sanitation. It was imperative that a veritable army of workers with know-how and physical stamina be recruited, transported, housed, hospitalized and fed. Giant earth-moving machines had to be designed, constructed and imported. Approximately one-fourth of the total construction force were U. S. Citizens. Some were "Tropical Tramps," moving as their fancy directed from one job to another across Latin America. The majority, however, came directly from the United States, representing every state, with the leading percentage from the Atlantic Coast states. For the first three years men were so definitely in the majority that in 1906, Gorgona, with more than one thousand young bachelors, had only three women of marriageable age! The years have corrected this ratio, but never quite balanced it.

First to come were young men with a sufficiently adventurous spirit to defy the ominous threat of death from yellow fever or a malignant malaria. By 1907 a few families began to arrive. The U. S. citizens were chiefly skilled workers, civil and

mechanical engineers, executives, clerks, machinists, boiler-makers, carpenters, plumbers, steam shovel operators, locomotive engineers, physicians, and nurses. The coming of these



An early Chapel-Lodge Hall erected by the Isthmian Canal Commission in larger centers for many uses.

skilled workers lifted the level of intelligence, education, and culture. Common labor and related unskilled work was done by natives, most of whom hailed from Jamaica or Barbados.

A high standard of morals was not easy to maintain in this far-away land of strange customs and culture. Home, family, church, and other moorings were in the distant background, while prominent in the foreground were Panama's brothels and saloons. Yet despite all obstacles the church was established—spontaneously, wisely, soundly, and within a new organizational and ideological pattern indigenous to the needs of its community.

A Thoughtful Government Helps

During the construction era, employees were too temporary to be expected to import, and support, their own clergy. Hence, in August, 1905, certain Chaplains were brought by the Isthmian Canal Commission. Their stipend, paid by the U. S. Government, was \$100 per month. One of these was stationed in each of the principal construction towns, charged with the duty of holding religious services.

In like manner the Commission met the need for wholesome, health-giving recreation by erecting and maintaining appropriate buildings, with the Young Men's Christian Association providing the professional operative staff. By July 1, 1906, such

institutions had been opened in Cristobal, Culebra, Empire, and Gorgona, and later, as need arose, in other communities. They readily became the social centers housing libraries, soda fountains, lounges, debating societies, amateur dramatics, dances, pool, basketball and other diversions, including professional entertainers from the states.

The first meetings of religious groups were in Post Offices, Mess Halls, school buildings, or wherever possible. It was an amusing sight to see a 200 pound man "poured" into a study desk designed for a fifth grade youngster. In 1907 the Isthmian Canal



Union Church School, Culebra—1911

Commission began to construct in Ancon, Balboa, Corozal, Cristobal, Culebra, Gatun, Gorgona, Empire, Las Cascadas and Paraiso, buildings designed to meet the needs both of churches and lodges. They were popularly known as the "I.C.C. Chapels." If people were sufficiently eager for religious expression to ignore impediments and inconveniences, the Government's agents were quick to sense the need of adequate places for religious worship and activities.

But Denominationalism Dies Hard

The research efforts of certain leaders in the Cristobal Union Church have yielded the following evidence that denominationalism was not easily abandoned in the formative period of the Zone's life. Mr. M. J. Steckel, a leader in the founding of the

Cristobal Y.M.C.A., and its Secretary from April 1907 until the Spring of 1909, authored the following, on August 24, 1949.



Culobra Union Christian League—1908. Front Row, Rev. Holland, Miss Blandford, J. F. Warner, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Stokee, Mrs. Geraw, Mrs. Williams, Calvett Williams, Mr. Wair, Mrs. McLaughlin, Mrs. Warner, Mr. Burton, Mrs. Dickey, Mrs. Nolan, Mr. —, Mrs. Browning, Paul Warner. Top Row: Mr. Geraw, Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Stoke and J. M. Weaver.

“In April, 1907 I found four ministers rotating in the holding of services in the Commission-built church (Cristobal). They were doing the same at Culebra, Empire and Gorgona. They represented Southern Baptist, Wesleyan (English, I think), Northern Methodist and probably Presbyterian. They were all supported, in large part, by their own church organizations. The Canal Commission had appointed them as Hospital Chaplains at \$110 per month, with all other employee privileges.

“Each was trying to establish his own denomination in those towns, and hoped to build a church with missionary funds from home. After a few weeks I asked each why he did not settle down in one of the towns and organize a Union Church. All turned the idea down, and the Baptist brother, with much heat.

“At Cristobal, the Sunday services of each denomination were attended by a very few people, perhaps an average of seven or eight. After conferring with Judge Brown, Mr. Stuntz and others,

I was asked to confer with Col. Goethals about the idea of one Union Church in each town—served by one of the four ministers. He was interested enough to talk to the ministers in a group and had his secretary call me, a few days later, to say that each minister persisted in the ambition to establish his own denominational church in each town and that he (Col. Goethals) did not want to interfere. “Our Cristobal group decided to go ahead and organize a Union Church. The Rev. William Pearn seemed of a high caliber and came to the Isthmus at an opportune time. We asked him to be our minister and Col. Goethals appointed him as a Hospital Chaplain. We began operations with about 25 charter members. Three of the ministers then graciously gave up their Sundays at Cristobal, but our belligerent brother of the Southern Baptist persuasion insisted that he would preach on the fourth Sunday as usual. Col. Goethals declined to order him to stay away, but slyly suggested that we ‘cut his financial nerve.’ That we did. He never showed up again!”

Mr. Pearn’s successor in Cristobal, the Rev. Carl H. Elliott, D.D., served for some five years, beginning January, 1909. In August, 1949 he wrote his current successor at Cristobal, the Rev. Philip Havener, the following, which augments the statements by Mr. Steckel.

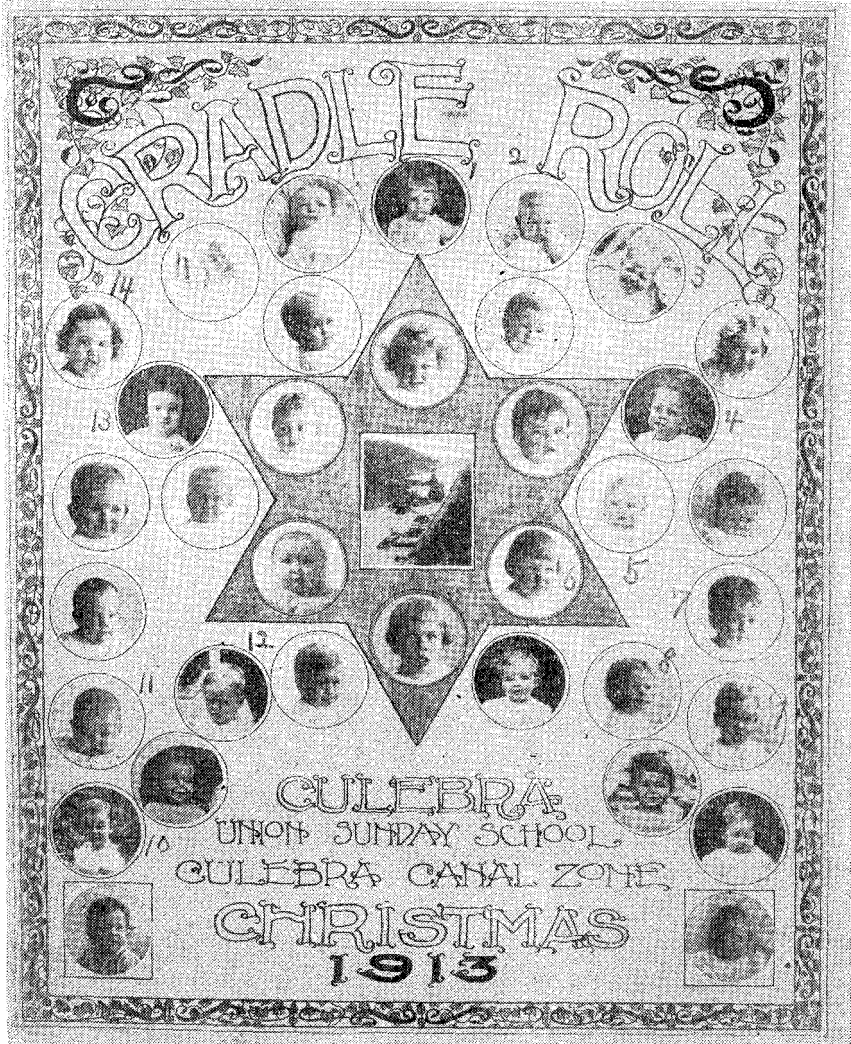
“This personal history, pertaining to my going to Panama, may interest you. Our Presbyterian Home Mission Board sent a “Knock-down” building to Cristobal for a Presbyterian mission among Canal employees, and then announced their wanting a minister for the field. I both wrote and went to New York to confer with the Secretaries. They said that a Mr. Ferris, New York business man, had a daughter on the Isthmus whose husband was a district Judge, and that he might give me a slant on the situation.”

Dr. Elliott’s letter continues, saying that during the resulting conference he was fully convinced that any denominational project illfitted the Zone needs. In consequence he refused to go as a Presbyterian representative. Finally the portable building was sold, the denomination involved abandoned its sectarian plans, and thereafter carried a leading role in providing personnel, guidance and building funds for the Union Church movement.

There are documents showing that the Methodist, and other denominations, likewise gave serious consideration to the establishment of their own parish units in early Canal Zone communities. With rare exceptions, however, the inappropriateness of such projects was recognized and plans were altered.

Christian Leagues Prelude the Church

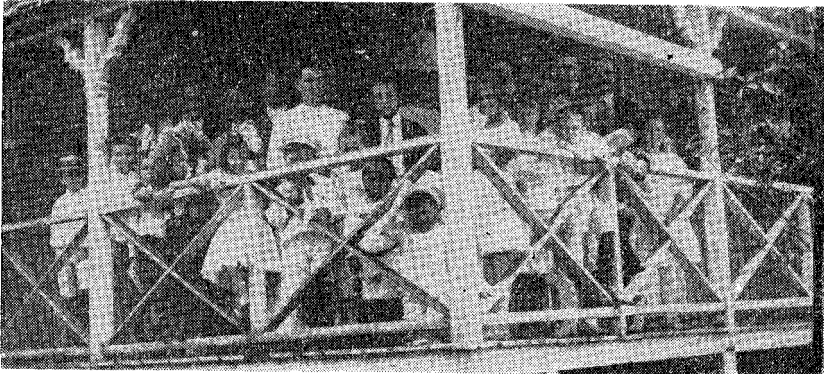
Those who had carried the load of leadership soon felt the need for more than just "preaching services" by Chaplains employed by, and responsible to, the Canal Commission. In conse-



Cradle Roll, Culebra, 1913. 1—Elva Smith; 2—Priscilla Hallen; 3—Priscilla Vanderslice; 4—Barbara Hallen; 5—Virginia Clement; 6—Marcella Gabe; 7—Ralph Kirkpatrick; 8—Jack Copeland; 9—Robert Copeland; 10—Harry Gabe; 11—Tom Casey; 12—Hoister Vanderslice; 13—Anna Bradney; 14—Anna Sophir.

quence, Christian Leagues were organized in the larger construction centers. Through them a community might voice a preference for a given Chaplain and, since his salary was augmented from their treasury they felt some right to make suggestions concerning his activities. Among the outstanding Chaplains serving Christian Leagues were the Rev. A. A. Nellis, the Rev. J. W. Holland and Dr. Carl Elliott. The latter and his wife now reside in Binghamton, New York where, in January 1949, their Golden Wedding anniversary was celebrated.

In the autumn of 1913, with the end of the construction period in sight, the Canal Commission terminated the services of all but two of the Chaplains. These were to serve as hospital visitors. In this change of policy there was among Christian lay workers full concurrence. A clergy selected, supported, and largely controlled by the Government was acceptable as a temporary expedient; it left much to be desired, however. American Protestantism at its vigorous best abhors paternalism. It prefers to provide its own financial support and insists upon an unhampered, directing voice.



Christmas Party, Culebra, 1966. Probably the first Christmas party held by a Church School on the Zone.

The Isthmian Sunday School Association was a unifying influence. It harmonized efforts, sharpened objectives, and improved pedagogical techniques among incipient church groups. Its quarterly meetings brought together folk from all communities and all denominations. Thus, in the splendid school of cooperative experience, the Zone churchmen began early to worship jointly under the Government Chaplains, and to work and plan

together in the Christian Leagues, the Union Sunday Schools, and the Isthmian Sunday School Association. Best of all, they learned to identify essentials and non-essentials, to keep each in its correct category and to cooperate with those in whose minor theological doctrines, or ecclesiastical practices, they might not completely concur. The Government gave assurance that communities would never expand beyond certain predictable maximums. This information helped to ripen into conviction the opinion that the old pattern of denominational competition could not be supported, even if it were desirable. Thus, the *Union Church of the Canal Zone* was conceived. . . .

II. A COOPERATIVE CHURCH IS CREATED

(1914)

Its Constitution Is Framed

The official creation of the Union Church of the Canal Zone was enacted on January 25, 1914, at Corozal, by representatives of the Christian Leagues of Balboa, Corozal, Cristobal, Culebra, Empire, Gatun, Paraiso, and Pedro Miguel. (The absence of Gorgona from this list, as one of the principal construction towns, is due to its abandonment and the wrecking or removal of its buildings in 1913. Such a fate also awaited other construction towns.) This history-making meeting was convened by Mr. J. M. Weaver, temporary chairman, with Mr. W. H. Barrett, clerk pro tem. Brief and pointed addresses were made apropos to the purpose of the meeting by Messrs. Homer A. A. Smith of Empire, and James Stokoe of Balboa. Previously appointed committees on Constitution and



Official Panama Canal photograph
Mr. H. A. A. Smith

Permanent Organization read, article by article, their recommendations. These were adopted with few changes. *The Union Church of the Canal Zone* was the name chosen. The officers elected were: Mr. H. A. A. Smith, president; Mr. John F. Warner, vice-president; Mr. W. E. Hoffman, secretary-treasurer. For his part in the preliminary stages of organization, Mr. Joseph M. Weaver was given a vote of appreciation.

Following are some of the more important articles of this original constitution:

ARTICLE I, Name.

This organization shall be known as the Union Church of the Canal Zone.

ARTICLE II, Object.

The object of this organization shall be the advancement of the principles of Christ's Kingdom on the Canal Zone, in the carrying on of the various religious activities characteristic of the communities from which our membership shall have come. Its activities shall be non-sectarian and its teaching evangelical.

ARTICLE III, Membership.

Membership in this organization shall be of two classes, Active and Honorary.

Persons may become Active members of this body upon presentation of a church letter, by satisfactory evidences of former connection or present connection with some church elsewhere, or if not already church members, by acceptance of the tenets of Christian living as laid down in the New Testament and expressed determination to henceforth lead a Christian life.

Persons may become Honorary members of this body by the expression of a desire to assist in carrying out the principles thereof, although belonging to no church. Honorary members are not eligible as members of the Executive Council hereinafter described.

All applications for membership shall be submitted to a Committee on Membership, composed of the Chaplain and four members selected from the Administrative Board of this body. In the absence of a Chaplain for this organization, the President thereof shall serve in his capacity on this committee. Recommendation of a majority of this committee shall be a necessary requisite for membership, and the report of action taken upon all outstanding applications for membership shall be a part of the regular procedure at each regular meeting of the Executive Council. Certificates of membership shall be issued to all persons so admitted. Members in good standing shall be entitled to letters to other churches upon removal from the Zone.

ARTICLE IV, Officers.

The officers of this organization shall be a President, Vice-president, and a Secretary-Treasurer.

ARTICLE VIII, Executive Council

The business affairs and management of this body shall be vested in an Executive Council, composed of the officers above named, who shall be ex-officio the corresponding officers of the Council: The Chairmen of all committees, and one representative of each fifty, or major fraction thereof members of the organization located in any town, to be selected by such members in said town on the principle of minority representation. The Chaplain, President of the Isthmian Sunday School Association, and Superintendent of Club-houses shall be ex-officio members of this organization, subject to the qualifications of Article III.

ARTICLE IX, Chaplains.

It is the purpose of this body to secure the services of one or more chaplains, who shall be clergymen regularly ordained by some Protestant denomination. They shall be engaged with the distinct understanding that their activities and teaching shall be evangelical in the broad sense, and shall be strictly non-sectarian. Any Chaplain may, as an individual, affiliate with any organization of churches or clergymen that may seem helpful to him, but may not report this body as subject to any sectarian conference or association. The duties of Chaplains shall be those usually performed by chaplains or local clergymen. They shall conduct such services and other activities as may be practicable, subject to the general control of the Council.

ARTICLE X, Local Churches.

Local churches may be organized as local sections of this organization, subject to the conditions herein set forth. When so organized they shall, through local committees, arrange for local activities, and will be afforded the encouragement and support that the central organization can justly render them.

In addition to the foregoing, the Constitution provided for Committees on Finance, Membership and Missions; outlined the duties of officers and committees; specified an Annual Meeting of the Church, and monthly meetings of the Executive Council and other necessary routine items.

Evidently the words "Chaplain" and "Honorary members" crept into the original draft by mistake. At any rate, on Feb-

bruary 4, 1914, Secretary-Treasurer Hoffman relayed to the members of the Executive Council, by mail, the suggestions that whenever the word "Chaplain" appeared in the constitution the word "Pastor" should be substituted, and that in the article dealing with membership the word "Associate" should be substituted for "Honorary." The provision making the Superintendent of the Clubhouses of the Panama Canal an ex-officio member of the Executive Council is clarified by the fact that in 1914 the Clubhouses still retained their original Y.M.C.A.-religious character. Their emergence as strictly business organizations came later.

Originally all business of importance was transacted by the Executive Council of the Union Church of the Canal Zone, rather than by the councils of local churches. Virtually all funds passed through the Council's treasury. The Council determined all matters relative to the selection of pastors, their salaries, and the conditions of their employment. This partially accounts for the absence of early records in the files of individual churches. Likewise, it accounts for the proportionately large amount of space occupied in these pages by the General Council of the Union Church of the Canal Zone, in comparison with that recording the stories of the seven parish churches.



The Rev. Wm. Flammer

The first and only clergyman to minister to a parish extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans.

The personnel of the first Membership Committee was Messrs. J. M. Weaver, J. F. Warner, James Stokoe, and W. E. Hoffman. The first Finance Committee consisted of Mr. Leander Larsen, Cristobal; Mr. B. F. Sisson, Gatun; Mr. W. H. Warr, Empire; Mr. H. K. Higgins, Culebra; Mr. I. W. Pickett, Paraiso; Mr. Russell, Pedro, Miguel; Mrs. A. L. Hackenberg, Corozal, and Mrs. James Stokoe, Balboa.

Comes the First Pastor

It was on May 3, 1914 that the Executive Council, after considering the credentials of several prospective pastors, issued a call to the Rev. William Flammer, a member of the Disciples of Christ denomination. He arrived with his wife and children from Covington, Ohio, on September 11, to become the first and only Protestant clergyman with a parish extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans (page Mr. Ripley!). He conducted religious services in Corozal, Cristobal, Gatun, Paraiso, Pedro Miguel, and Balboa, his headquarters. His schedule was arranged by a committee consisting of Messrs. Harrington, Larson, Twitchell, and Mrs. Hackenberg. His arrival prompted the Executive Council to determine the prorating of its expenditures among the local groups on a per capita assessment basis. Mr. Flammer was asked to visit, as early as possible, each local group as a prelude to its being organized into a church.

About this time the respective memberships were as follows:

Location	Members	Associates	Total
Corozal	19	1	20
Cristobal	91	13	104
Culebra	36	11	47
Empire	19	0	19
Gatun	12	1	13
Paraiso	9	5	14
Pedro Miguel	1	1	2
Totals	187	32	219

A Changing, Confusing Year

The year 1914 was a hectic one in Canal Zone life. On March 31 of that year the old Isthmian Canal Commission, the administrative agency during construction days, officially ceased to exist. The next day "The Panama Canal" was born as the permanent administrative agency. New conditions of employment were initiated. On the evening of March 31 *all* employees were discharged with accrued leave monies paid. The next morning all employees needed in the permanent organization to maintain and operate the Canal were reemployed without a break in service. The transition of this eventful year involved also the abandonment both of Culebra and Empire. Their buildings were

loaded in sections on flat cars and re-erected in other town sites. Soon the old foundations, sidewalks, and other landmarks of these once busy towns were reclaimed by the ever aggressive jungle. Fortunately, most of the residents who were active in the Union Church project were moved to Balboa where their religious activities continued.

It was during this year of uncertainty and radical change that the Union Church movement had its official genesis. "Shall we remain in the Zone permanently? If not, perhaps this is the time to return home"—was a frequent personal problem faced by many that year. Life seemed such a disturbing uncertainty! The confusion of wrecking and rebuilding of towns, and the consequent multiple moving of families had their deleterious effects on the infant church. But, as we shall discover, it was a husky infant, able to withstand the calamities of adolescence. It thrived in spite of its unstable environment.

Real Estate Is Purchased

The presence of a new pastor with his family brought into clear focus the problems of obtaining living quarters for him. On May 24 of this bustling year, 1914, the Council appointed its President and Messrs. A. D. Dickson, James Stokoe, and J. F. Warner a committee to present plans for acquiring a parsonage at Balboa. The following quotation from the Council's minutes indicates that this committee petitioned the Governor to assign Panama Canal buildings for use as a church or churches, and a parsonage: "The request for quarters for the pastor was denied, and in the matter of a church building, an alternative proposition was suggested to that of one built by the Panama Canal government." Since the correspondence with Governor Goethals cannot be located we may only guess, with the reader, the full background of the foregoing. It is known that in August 1914, however, the Union Church acquired its first property—the parsonage in Balboa. It was originally constructed at Culebra. The cost to the church was \$500 plus transportation to Balboa, and the cost of certain changes totalling \$2,000. Before arriving at its present location, adjacent to the Balboa Union Church, it was located for about one year near the present Balboa Fire Station, on the opposite side of the railroad tracks.

Some Early Leaders

During its first year the Executive Council held five meetings with the following persons known to attend: Mr. W. H. Barrett, Mr. Bethea, Mr. Bressie, Mr. H. D. Brittin, Judge and Mrs. Thomas E. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Daly, Mr. A. B. Dickson, the Reverend William Flammer, Mrs. A. L. Hackenberg, Mrs. W. H. Harrison, Mr. W. W. Herrington, Mr. H. K. Higgins, Mr. W. E. Hoffman, Mr. Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Kelley, Mr. W. H. Kromer, Mr. Leander Larson, Mr. J. A. Page, Mr. I. W. Pickett, Mrs. G. W. P. Ramsay, Mr. F. M. M. Richardson, Mr. C. R. Russell, Mr. B. F. Sisson, Mr. H. A. A. Smith, Mr. James Stokoe, Mr. F. H. Townsend, Mr. James N. Twitchell, Mr. James T. Veen, Mr. S. P. Verner, Mr. J. F. Warner, Mr. W. H. Warr, Mr. J. M. Weaver, Mrs. F. N. Weidner, and Mr. R. C. Worsley. Since complete records were not kept, it is a safe guess that there were other delegates not recorded.

Off to an Encouraging Start

The eventful twelve months of the Church's first year had lifted it from the experimental stage to that of a going concern destined to permanency and large usefulness. At least one piece of real estate had been purchased. One regular pastor was on the field, and a committee was actively searching for another. Several parish groups had been formally organized into churches. The membership was growing. The idea of a *Union* effort was gaining favorable attention on every hand; indeed, it had so appealed to those of strong leadership in every community that many of them were already serving it in places of responsibility. There was obviously at work the parental instinct that commonly characterizes the pioneer; and, of course, the driving determination to make Christ real in their own households and communities gave further impetus to the movement. Added to these basic motives was another: the stimulation that inheres in any clinical quest for a new and better way.

Moreover there was the consciousness that their whole way of life was as a light set on one of the world's hill tops to be seen by all. This consciousness was clearly reflected in an apt editorial appearing in *The Messenger*, September, 1915—the first year of that journal's existence. It read as follows:

“The Canal Zone, situated as it is at the meeting place of the commerce of the world and at the very doorway of largely undeveloped regions of Central and South America, will naturally be taken as representative of the United States by thousands of people who never have and maybe never will see the United States themselves. Therefore for the good reputation of our country and for the dissemination of those ideas of progress, peace and righteousness, which we as a nation consider so peculiarly our heritage and mission, it behooves us to see that all things on the Zone are worthy. The Government, in the construction of the greatest engineering project ever undertaken, has shown our progressiveness and by guaranteeing its neutrality has demonstrated our peaceful sentiments. By building schools, clubhouses and appropriate dwellings it has illustrated our concern for education, social life and the home; but from the very nature of things the residents of the Zone must themselves provide the character and institutions which give proof of our spirituality. Among the institutions the church is by far the most potent and by the union of effort and consecration of purpose and life which we of the Zone display will the righteousness of our nation be judged by much of the world. The union of church effort has been demonstrated by the comparative absence of denominationalism and sectarianism and by the tendency to forget, or at least to ignore, the unessential points of doctrines and creeds and to unite upon the broad principles of Christian obedience and the life and fellowship depending thereon. It would be a shame if we who call ourselves Christians should fail to demonstrate here the possibility of essential unity in religious matters.

“Luckily wise leadership and broad spirituality have given us in the Union Church of the Canal Zone a solution of the problem of unity.”

III. AND THE CHILD GREW

(1915 to 1917)

About Pastors

The long pastorate with its assets has been, unfortunately, exceedingly rare in the Union Church of the Canal Zone. Perhaps the distance from native land is a contributing influence. Other factors are the severing of ecclesiastical ties, the isolation and consequent professional loneliness, and the absence of an enlarging opportunity for service. These together with a highly

contagious restlessness that long has pervaded the area, induce a sense of temporariness.

The Rev. J. V. Koontz, the second pastor, was a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary. He appeared before the Executive Council on June 6, 1915, and was promptly assigned to serve in Cristobal, Gatun, and Paraiso with Mr. Flammer remaining at Balboa, Corozal, and Pedro Miguel. In July, after less than one year of service, Mr. Koontz departed, followed two weeks later by Mr. Flammer, with not quite two years of service. With a recognized need and plans already formulated for calling a third pastor, the Council's committee was suddenly on a quest for three!

In these days, which antedate official connection with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, it was the Rev. George T. Scott, a Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, who voluntarily and effectively gave aid in finding ministers.

In May, the Council determined that Cristobal and Gatun together could support a pastor; that Balboa could support its pastor, and contribute \$25 a month toward the Pedro Miguel-Paraiso field, which could raise the remainder. The Rev. John C. Abels, a Presbyterian, was assigned to Cristobal-Gatun; the Rev. William H. Covert, a Baptist, was imported for Pedro Miguel-Paraiso; and the Rev. Sidney S. Conger, a Presbyterian, came to Balboa. After about six months Mr. Covert resigned. In March, 1917, came the Rev. Mr. Raymond E. Marshall, Methodist, to serve Gatun, thus permitting Mr. Abels to devote all his time to Cristobal. A few months later, Cristobal employed Miss Lucy Bittinger to assist in the work, particularly among the local Chinese. Miss Bittinger was a graduate of the Presbyterian Training School of Baltimore. She was a regularly inducted Deaconess, and had travelled extensively in her work in which she was sufficiently prominent to be listed in "Who's Who in America." The financing of this special project was handled by the local parish.

First Building Plans and Funds

In February, 1915, the Executive Council, still benefiting by the wise leadership of President Smith, Vice-President J. F.

Warner, and Secretary-Treasurer Kromer, began a determined quest for a building fund at Balboa. Captain D. C. Nutting, Superintendent of the Mechanical Division, Chairman of the committee, reported \$4,200 was raised locally by the following January, with additional subscriptions in prospect. He was optimistic concerning the raising of a total building fund of \$250,000, provided the needs were brought to the attention of philanthropists in the United States. For that purpose the committee was authorized to expend up to \$1,000. An aid in this campaign was a carefully prepared leaflet depicting building needs in the several churches. In October, 1916, the Council met and decided to send the Rev. Sidney S. Conger to the United States to raise building funds. At this same meeting six Council members gave \$1,000. The following January a total of \$8,000 was announced. In March, 1917, Mr. Conger returned with an optimistic report. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America had given unalloyed support. It had created a committee of eighteen members, known as "The Committee on Religious Work in the Canal Zone," to handle the campaign. Mr. Conger, as secretary of this committee, had been given an office in the Federal Council building. The sum of \$22,110 had been raised. This, together with the mounting local sum, made \$30,000 immediately available for construction work in Balboa. Meanwhile the Governor had approved, for church uses, the assignment of the land on which the Balboa Union Church now stands. At the August meeting, Mr. Smith, President of the Council and chairman of the Building Committee, reported that work had already begun on the Balboa building. Also serving on this committee were Messrs. S. M. Hitt (the architect), L. C. Maurer, W. J. McLaughlin, and the Rev. J. C. Abels. The subsequent costs, and results, proved the wisdom of not letting the building project to contract, but handling it under the supervision of the committee directed by Mr. J. A. Muller, loaned to the church by the Panama Canal.

The cornerstone of this imposing Gothic structure was laid on September 25, 1917, by Mr. H. A. A. Smith, President of the Executive Council of the Union Church of the Canal Zone. Addresses were made by the Rev. J. C. Abels, the Rev. R. E. Marshall, and Dr. George A. Miller. By December the work was

nearly finished. Limited funds had forbidden construction of more than the first story with a temporary roof—but the superstructure was soon to follow.

At the December meeting of the Council in 1917, it was revealed that a committee composed of Messrs. C. L. Vandeburgh, Phillip Kelley, and A. S. Boyd had purchased an old school building from the Canal for the sum of \$826.75 to be converted into a church building at Pedro Miguel. The materials, lumber, paint, and electrical and plumbing items brought the total cost to approximately \$1,500. The cooperation of members and friends kept the repair and alteration labor expense at zero!

Sundry Changes

Meanwhile, the major changes in communities from the construction period had continued. Late in 1915, Corozal was in the last stages of abandonment by the Panama Canal, with the U. S. Army ready to move in. Most of the Union Church members had been relocated in Balboa. A year later Paraiso had become so nearly abandoned as a Canal town that there were insufficient Union Church members to warrant the maintenance of a church. The few who were there were advised to attend church in Pedro Miguel. The Paraiso Sunday School was soon closed also. Indeed, between this time and the expansions incident to the Third Locks Construction and the second World War, there were only four communities of sufficient size to support a church—the two terminal centers of Balboa-Ancon, and Cristobal-Colon; and the two Locks towns, Gatun and Pedro Miguel.

In June, 1915, the Council voted important changes in the financial procedures. There was to be a uniform plan, operative in all local units, for the collection of funds—preferably the envelope system then being employed in Balboa. Moreover, local churches were to meet incidental expenses from their own funds. The central treasury of the Union Church of the Canal Zone would continue to meet standing, fixed obligations such as salaries, etc. These changes were augmented about a year later by requiring each local church to accept a per capita assessment, the amount of which was to be determined by the Union Church of the Canal Zone. The first of these amounted to \$1.50 per month.

Any funds raised in excess of the per capita were to be retained by the church involved.

A Powerful Friend Appears

No account of the Union Church of the Canal Zone could be complete without testimony concerning the understanding spirit, the keen insight, and the untiring efforts of the Rev. George A.



The Rev. George A. Miller, D.D.
Methodist Bishop

Miller, D.D., who, in 1916, came to superintend the Methodist Missionary work in the Republic of Panama. Seeing the inadvisability of denominational work in the Zone, he became a most effective enthusiast for the Union Church movement, supplying its pulpits, giving guidance to its policies, helping to secure its pastors, and in every way possible aiding its interests, both locally and in the States. Subsequently, while he served as a Methodist Bishop in Mexico and South America, Dr. Miller maintained this active interest in the Union Churches.

Even today, in his retirement, this fine Christian leader inquires about the united cause to which he contributed so much.

"The Messenger"—Debut and Demise

It was felt that some medium to report Union Church news to its members and friends, to record changes in membership rolls, to project new plans, to state official acts accurately, etc., was necessary. This need was met by *The Messenger*. Mr. J. M. Weaver was succeeded as editor by the Rev. R. E. Marshall, upon whose retirement late in 1918 the honor fell again to Mr. Weaver. Mr. J. F. Warner and the Rev. A. B. Boynton each served as editor for a time, after which *The Messenger* returned again, for several years of excellent editing, to Mr. Warner. The costs

were met by a subscription price of \$1.00 per year, and various subsidies from the individual churches, the Executive Council, the Balboa Woman's Auxiliary, the Army and Navy Y.M.C.A., and the Panama Railroad for advertising. After carrying its important role of background support for seventeen years, the publication seems to have outlived its usefulness and, in 1932, it was discontinued after several reductions both in size and frequency of publication. Due to the care and thoughtfulness of someone—probably Mr. J. F. Warner—a stack of these magazines has been preserved.

Panama's Most Impressive Protestant Conclave

Early in February, 1916, the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America was convened in Panama City. It was fostered by the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America which was itself formally constituted at this historic convocation, and during the intervening years has been at once a guide and an inspiration to cooperative endeavor among the evangelical churches of Latin America. President Smith, of the Union Church of the Canal Zone, was chairman of a Housing and Entertainment Committee that had labored for months. The Union Church leaders were appropriately excited over this meeting. They shared its central objectives, and also desired to have Dr. Robert E. Speer, Chairman of the gathering, see their work at first hand and to discuss with him the pending affiliation with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, of which he was currently the President.

There were 450 Protestant leaders present—clergymen, missionaries, and laymen. They evidenced an enthusiastic and sympathetic interest in the Union Church project, and at an informal meeting presided over by Dr. Speer, the delegates unanimously adopted the following significant statement, presented by Dr. Ira Landrith:

“Resolved: That it is the sense of this informal conference of delegates to the Congress of Christian Work in Latin America, that the Union Church of the Canal Zone deserves and is hereby accorded our endorsement and commendation as offering the best solution of the problem of Evangelical Christian work under the prevailing conditions.”

Representatives of the following denominations subsequently approved that resolution: Methodist, both North and South; Presbyterian, both North and South; Dutch Reformed; Lutheran, Christian (Disciples); Congregationalist; United Brethren; and Moravian Brethren. Among those participating in this informal conference adopting the foregoing resolution were such renowned spiritual leaders as Professor William Adams Brown; Dr. Silas Daugherty; Bishop A. T. Howard; President Henry Churchill King; Bishop W. R. Lambeth; Editor, Dr. Charles Clayton Morrison; Dr. George H. Trull; Bishop W. C. Shepherd; Dr. J. E. Vance; Dr. Samuel Guy Inman; Dr. John R. Mott and Dr. Robert E. Speer, the latter three of whom spoke on successive Sundays in the Balboa Union Church pulpit. Subsequently Dr. Landrith, an outstanding churchman of the century, wrote as follows concerning this matter, for publication in *The Messenger*, April 1916:

"Union Church work in such situations as exist in the Canal Zone is so manifestly necessary as to leave no room for discussion. It is not only the best way, but the only effective one, to conserve and promote the religious life of the community. Imagine the pitiful farce of it all, if every denomination and church now represented in the several Zone branches of the Union Church should start its own organization! And if all are not to have separate church buildings and official boards, why should any one of them do so? If it be argued that there may be members enough of any one church to meagerly support a separate congregation, is not this in itself a strong reason for not doing it, since the strong ought to help the weak? Manifestly if one and then another and afterwards yet others shall organize separately and build, the remnant will be too feeble for self-support and will have no right of appeal to organized funds and boards of the United States and Europe. Of course this remnant could find religious asylum and opportunity for service in the denominational churches, but many of them would find this harder to do than if there were a Union Church with its liberal provision for freedom of judgment and forms of worship.

"Some of the evident advantages of the Union Church in the Canal Zone are:

"1. It makes possible adequate equipment, able leadership, and the spiritual blessings of self-support.

"2. It illustrates, right here on the hill-top of the Latin American world, the possibilities and beauties of Christian unity, and its example will be widely followed.

"3. It answers, without arrogance and without offense, the age-old criticism of nominally united Catholicism that Protestant or Evangelical Christianity is hopelessly and belligerently divided.

"4. It has such strength, dignity, and moral influence that it may confidently undertake necessary social service and public moral beneficence. Whereas a number of anemic and puny congregations working apart would be comparatively helpless, perhaps contemptible in the eyes of selfish wrong doers.

"Personally, the writer longs to see, even in the more settled sections of America, some similar getting together, and for that reason is eager to see the local experiment succeed grandly, gloriously. Sure, if we must live together eternally in heaven, we ought to be able to work in accord here for a few years!

"It strikes me that, in a changing population like yours, there is but one kind of church that would be justifiable in organizing a competing congregation, and that is the church that believes that the only way to heaven is through its own little ecclesiastical wicket gate. If there are any such churches in Evangelical ecclesiasticism, then truly we ought to know it, and your experience may aid in the revelation.

"Whatever may be our kindly and fraternal attitude toward previously organized and established churches at work among the Zone white people, there should be no more of them as long as the Union Church can and will do the work."

Inimical Criticisms

In March, 1917, the Council appointed a committee on Revision of the Constitution and By-Laws. The records reveal no important changes other than the appearance of *The Union Church Covenant*. A wide and careful search has failed to reveal the authorship of this remarkable statement which today is being adopted verbatim, or with minor changes, by Union Churches in other lands. Its initial appearance, however, occasioned inimical comments on the part of certain theological technicians. According to copies of correspondence *The Christian Advocate* carried an adverse criticism of this Covenant in an article entitled "The Panama Statement of Faith." Thoroughly aroused, and with the cudgel in his strong hands, the Rev. George A. Miller took to task both the editor, Dr. James R. Joy, and the author, Mr. Harold Paul Sloan. In a very firm manner he reminded the latter of certain worthy sanctions that officially backed the Union Church movement; that most of its members were members of some home denomination. He wrote further that—

"We are trying to do what Jesus himself would do here. Such ill-informed criticisms as yours tend to discredit our work and to undermine our home support. No one here has the slightest thought of offering a new interpretation. . . . Come down to the Canal Zone and see what we are trying to do and then get in and boost . . . you have missed the point, my brother."

To the editor of the magazine carrying the article Dr. Miller sent a convincing reply for the earliest possible publication. In it he gave sound assurance that the Union Church of the Canal Zone is—

"—not a denomination nor a substitute for one. . . . Its Covenant is not a compendium of Systematic Theology. . . . No one familiar with the facts supposes that this covenant is other than a basis of fellowship and service for members of any and all denominations who are large enough in mind, and earnest enough in spirit to forget dogmatic differences and work together in the Canal Zone for the spiritual leadership of Jesus Christ. . . . There are still men, some of them Methodists, who prefer insistence upon dogma rather than fellowship in service as foundation for a Christian program. Such men insist upon multiplying denominations—even in the Canal Zone, and we have two denominations here creating discord and division, and spending missionary money *in large sums*—weakening the attack on the forces of evil. . . . When Mr. Sloan visits Panama he will find that 'the harvest from such a sowing' is *not* all 'confusion and vanity,' but instead a strong program of Christian service in a very difficult field."

Here is the full text of the Covenant. Through the years it has been subscribed to by members joining the Union Churches on a confession of Faith:

"Thankful for God's abundant goodness, and for His great gift of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, I hereby covenant to seek to know and to do His Will, and to promote, as far as I can, the interests of Christ's Kingdom.

"Accepting Jesus Christ and His teachings as my supreme standard of faith, and the Bible as containing God's progressive revelation of Himself to man, and heartily believing in the province of private judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures, I seek fellowship with all who devoutly love the Lord Jesus Christ and accept His standard of teaching and conduct as set forth in the New Testament.

"Realizing that the success of the Church depends upon the consecration of its individual membership, I covenant to attend its serv-

ices, to contribute to its support, to labor to maintain its peace and harmony, and as far as possible, in every way promote its temporal and spiritual welfare."

A clipping from *The Panama Morning Journal* reveals further evidence that the uninformed misunderstood the dominating motives and the central purposes of the Union Church, and that its teachings were but the distilled essence of Protestantism's intellectual and spiritual heritage. According to a news story of January 7, 1917, the Rev. H. R. Carson, of the Cathedral of St. Luke, Ancon, made an address at the dedicatory services of the new Southern Baptist Church building in Balboa Heights. The news item, reporting some of his negative comments concerning an unidentified "Union Church," does not explain the pertinence of these condemnations to the dedication of a Baptist Church edifice. Their content is indicated in the rebuttal authored by the Rev. Sidney S. Conger, at that time pastor of the Balboa Union Church. It was published in the same newspaper a few days later. In part it reads:

"We cannot allow the impression to prevail that we say 'Oh it does not matter whether you believe in Baptism or not; whether you believe in the Sacraments or not; whether you believe in missionary work or not. Nor do we say, we 'will build a church in which nothing will be expected of men except a belief in brotherhood and a faith heavenward.' We would disapprove of such as thoroughly as Mr. Carson himself. . . . The Union Church believes in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; in his death for us, in his resurrection, in which He has brought life and immortality. We believe in the church, a visible organization founded by Him to which He committed the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper . . . we believe that this faith is the hope of mankind, and have no gospel save this to preach. It is because Jesus says so that we believe that One is our Father, even God, and all we are brethren. It is because he says 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel' that we believe in missions."

Subsequently in *The Messenger*, January, 1917, Mr. Conger amplified his epitome of the Union Church's pattern of faith, as follows:

"Now a certain amount of that sort of criticism of Union churches is always to be expected from people who have a little denominational axe to grind, or from people who would prefer to have the religious interests in any region divided up into as many units and

as small ones as possible in order to minimize their influence: (divide and conquer). But some of this criticism may come from conscientious people, and to them I take this opportunity to state that for which the Union Church stands.

"We stand for the vision of God which Jesus Christ gave to the world because we stand for Jesus Christ, we believe in Him.

"He is our Lord (which means Master) and our Saviour.

"We believe that He shows us manhood as it ought to be. His teaching and example are our law and ought to be our practice.

"We stand for the proposition that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person; God manifest in the flesh.

"There is nothing negative or vague about that, is there? Is there anything here which suggests dodging something?

"The Union Church stands for the Bible. It holds precisely the same views on it which are held by all the great bodies whose members are in our Union Church.

"We believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe He is given without measure to those who pray for this gift from the Father.

"The Union Church believes in the Church. It does not stand for an unorganized or disorganized Christianity. It does believe that a Christianity organized into a hundred different bodies who are not too busy fighting the enemy to fire an occasional shot at one another, is perhaps organized into something very like disorganization.

"We stand for the reality of the visible Church. A body organized on the earth by Jesus of Nazareth, to whom He committed His work, and which He charged with the two great Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in both of which we believe.

"The Union Church stands also for missions and work for others. Anybody who knows what has happened here in the past few weeks knows this.

"Now all this is perfectly definite, positive, and clear.

"But one may say: How then does it happen that anyone finds fault with you on this ground?

"We must find the answer in several other things for which the Union Church stands and others for which it *therefore cannot stand*.

"We stand for liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment *within* the limits I have already indicated. That is to say we do not wish to limit the conscience of a man who conscientiously prefers Mohammed or Buddha to Christ, but we don't want him in the Union Church.

"But when he says: 'I believe in the LORD Jesus Christ, and intend to try, with His aid, to serve and follow Him,' then we *do* want him. And he is to be the judge of what that following is.

"If reading out of the Christian Fellowship all who fail to agree

with you on some point of doctrine or practice is your idea of standing for something—you are right:—the Union Church doesn't stand for it.

It *cannot* stand for it and stand for liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment.

"We stand for Christian unity, for Christian brotherhood, for Christian efficiency. 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.'

"We stand for *united*, efficient effort for the kingdom of Christ. We do not stand for the destruction of the great Christian bodies out of whose members we are constituted, nor for the absorption of any one or more of them by the others.

"On the contrary, we have definite endorsement from a number of them: because we stand for what we believe is the most Christian and effective way to do God's work right here where we are: That is—pulling together."

Evidences of Virility

During the four eventful years, from the beginning of 1914 to the close of 1917, the Union Church movement had grown from its "swaddling clothes" status until it had achieved an amazing degree of maturity. It had regular pastors in each of its four churches and a missionary in David. It had a house of worship in Balboa and in Pedro Miguel, and a parsonage in the former town. Its membership had grown to total 550—245 in Balboa, 109 in Cristobal, 86 in Gatun, and 90 in Pedro Miguel. Moreover, this growth had come despite the transition of the Canal organization from a temporary to a permanent status. The end of the construction and reorganization eras meant the passing of many picturesque and exotic men and events inevitably incident to pioneer projects. However, there was plenty of pioneering ahead as succeeding pages will reveal. . . .

IV. ROBUST YOUTH

(1918-1921)

In addition to an unusual number of pastoral changes (see the tabulation in Book IV), the years 1919 to 1921 were characterized by a change in the Constitution, the raising of building funds, and the strategic move to affiliate with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

More Constitutional Changes

One significant change in the Constitution read:

"The object of the church shall be to furnish a basis for the union of Protestant believers, in order to carry on effectively and economically such religious activities as will best promote the interests of Christ's Kingdom. Its activities shall be non-sectarian and its teachings evangelical."

Membership in the Executive Council was enlarged to include the chairmen of all Standing Committees and the Local Council Chairmen. The Standing Committee on Education was created and assigned the task of unifying and coordinating the educational program of the church. A new article was adopted, creating a Board of Trustees,

"for the protection of property interests of the Union Church of the Canal Zone, and for the identification of corporate responsibility."

Important changes were voted concerning budgets. Thereafter, the local church had to raise and disburse its own local budget and pay its prorated share of the Executive Council's expense. The amount of the latter was to be determined by the Finance Committee of the Executive Council.

More Building Budgets, Centered in Cristobal

The minutes of January, 1918, reveal that President Smith reported \$33,000 having been spent on the Balboa building, and so a year later serious consideration centered in the erection of a building in Cristobal. Much of the land now occupied by both the terminal towns of Balboa and Cristobal was "made" land, resulting from fills in disposing of the dirt scooped from the Canal channel. The Cristobal church was assigned a lot on one of these fills late in 1919. There was on hand for a structure approximately \$40,000, most of which the Rev. R. E. Marshall had secured in the States. Dr. C. A. Hearne, treasurer of the Cristobal Building Fund, reported in April 1920 that the Cristobal parsonage was nearly complete, at a cost of \$4,926.35.

In September, 1920, the Council sent the Cristobal pastor, Dr. Harry Owen, to the States to solicit funds for the entire building program, with the understanding that the completion of the Cristobal building would have priority. President Smith was authorized to proceed with plans and specifications for the upper

story of the Balboa building. In September, 1921, Dr. Hearne reported the Cristobal Church ninety percent completed, with nearly \$800 still on hand.

An Appropriate Adoption

From the outset the wisdom of affiliating with some representative interdenominational body had been obvious to the Union Church leaders. After careful surveys of potentialities, the Executive Council met on May 7, 1921, to consider an agreement for affiliation with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. A trust agreement was executed naming the Union Church of the Canal Zone as party of the first part, and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Boards of Foreign and Home Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Board of Church Election of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the Congregational Building Society, and any other similar Board which might thereafter signify its willingness to participate in the agreement, all as parties of the second part. The trust agreement named the Union Church of the Canal Zone as a voluntary Christian Association which desired to ensure the continuance of the work in which it had been engaged. The agreement stated that the Union Church owned buildings in which a grand total of \$80,000 had been invested, \$36,000 of which had been given by local persons with \$44,000 coming from sources in the States. Mention was made of an estimated need for an additional sum of \$150,000 to complete the building program. It was indicated that on a basis of caring for their members located in the Canal Zone, the cooperating denominations had been petitioned to provide this money. It was agreed in this historic document that: 1.—The Federal Council would create a committee of fifteen persons (later designated as the Committee on Religious Work in the Canal Zone) which would counsel and advise the church in the conduct of its affairs; 2.—The property of the Union Church of the Canal Zone should be deeded to the Federal Council; and 3.—The above mentioned Committee should have power to determine conditions under which a transfer of funds should be made and the work of the church conducted.

Pursuant to these agreements, the signatory Boards gave the following sums toward the completion of the Cristobal building:

The Congregational Church Building Society	\$ 5,000
The Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church	\$ 7,500
The Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church	\$ 7,500
The Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South	\$ 2,000
The Board of Church Erection Fund of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.	\$10,000
Total	\$32,000

Both parties fully agreed that, in deeding its property to the Federal Council, the Union Church of the Canal Zone should remain in unimpaired and independent control of all of its property so long as its work should continue to be evangelical and non-sectarian. Failure to adhere to these principles would cause the property to revert to the Federal Council for liquidation. The Executive Council approved the agreement without dissent, and voted thanks to Dr. Robert E. Speer and Mr. George



The Rev. Roy B. Guild, D.D.

T. Scott, both of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, for their friendly counsel and untiring assistance in interpreting the Union Church's program and needs to denominational leaders in the States. Much that these gentlemen had been doing was immediately to fall to another of the Union Church's most sincere and effective friends, Dr. Roy B. Guild, Field Secretary of the Federal Council.

In retrospect, it is easy to discern that the affiliation with the Federal Council and the centering of individual church affairs in the respective Local Councils, rather than in the

General Council, were matters of far-reaching consequence.

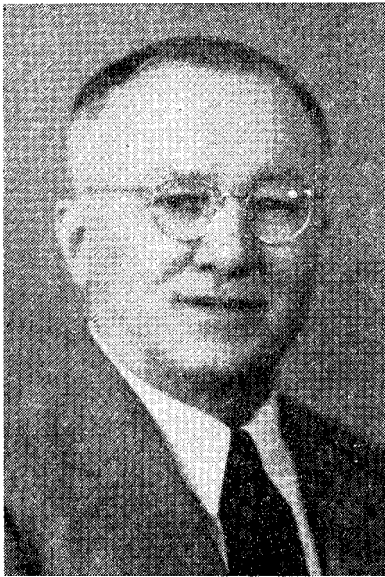
Progress in the building program loomed in the immediate future, but with it a population decline and near retrogressions.

V. GRAY DAYS—SILVER LININGS

(1922-1937)

Construction Problems and Progress

Since late in 1917 the first story of the Balboa building with its flat, tar-paper roof had housed the church school and the worship services. Long and intense had been the agitation for



**The Rev. Raymond R. Gregory,
D.D.**

the building of its superstructure. During the years 1922, 1923, and 1925, the Rev. Harry B. Fisher of Cristobal; the Rev. A. R. Brown, and the Rev. R. E. Marshall of Balboa had all been sent to the States on a quest for further building funds. The latter reported a unique experience with a Mr. Post, an elderly New York business man of large means. Knowing of nothing more interesting than to continue the management of his affairs, Mr. Post refused to retire. Since he had no desire to accumulate more wealth, semi-annually he disbursed his earnings of the previous half year to worthy activities. Mr. Marshall's cause initially benefited

in the amount of \$500. On invitation from Mr. Post, he made two subsequent appeals, receiving in all \$1,500.

The total cost of the building was \$110,000 of which \$30,000 was raised locally and the remainder in the States. The sum of \$10,000 came from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, and a like amount

from the E. S. Harkness Estate. To Mr. A. M. Allen, whose architectural skill was employed on suggestion from the Federal Council, goes much credit for the building's beauty. As in constructing the first story, no contract was let for the superstructure. Instead, a supervisor, Mr. Edward Spearman, was employed. The quality and the economy of construction again proved the wisdom of this policy on the part of the Building Committee. Its personnel was as follows: Mr. Leroy Smith, Chairman; Mr. O. T. Marstand, Secretary; Mr. F. L. Piper, Treasurer; Messrs. R. H. Adams, H. H. Alexander, W. H. Kromer, G. E. Murphy,

H. A. McConaughey, and J. F. Warner. As is attested by the following statement from Mr. McConaughey, then president of the Union Church of the Canal Zone, there were financial difficulties:



Mr. Harvey A. McConaughey

"Once the work stopped due to a lack of funds. Mr. Piper and I tried, unsuccessfully, to sell Acting Governor Burgess on the idea of a loan from the Panama Railroad. Later we were ready to install the three large windows and the Rose window. The frames, manufactured by the Mechanical Division, were ready for delivery but there was no money to meet the \$10,000 costs. Mr. Marstrand and I went to the Acting Governor, seeking release of the window frames in advance of payment. Replying to the Acting Governor's inquiry about security, I

told him that we could get one hundred members to sign individual \$100 notes, but that the high character of the Union Church members should be sufficient security. We promised that the bill would be met within a year. He consulted the Auditor of the Canal, Mr. Elwyn Greene, as to the possibilities. Mr. Greene replied that the Canal had over a million dollars outstanding and that another ten thousand dollars was nothing to worry over! He said he did not think any security was necessary. The frames were released, and within a year **were** paid for."

It was a high moment when, on January 24, 1926, this beautiful building was dedicated. Dr. David G. Wylie of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Religious Work in the Canal Zone, came down from New York especially to preach the dedicatory sermon. Others participating in the ceremonies were: the Rev. George S. Austin; the Rev. A. B. Boynton; Mrs. T. S. Booz; Colonel Harry Burgess, Acting Governor of the Canal; Mrs. R. L. Dwelle; the Rev. Raymond E. Marshall, pastor at Balboa; Bishop George A. Miller of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Mr. Harvey A. McConaughey, President of the Union Church of the Canal Zone; Chaplain Reynolds; Mrs. Sarah E. Wardell; and Mr. Paul Warner.

Financial progress on the Union Church buildings moved rapidly. Within eight months of the dedication of the completed Balboa Union Church, the Cristobal Church debt was cleared in entirety, and only \$8,300 remained on the Balboa structure. Meanwhile, the Pedro Miguel people, finding their old building in a hopeless condition, had determined to erect a new one. On behalf of this congregation Mr. Myrick assured the Council that a suitable edifice could be had for \$5,000. Of this, \$2,000 would be contributed by the E. S. Harkness Estate, with \$3,000 (much of it already subscribed) raised locally. The President appointed the following Building Committee: Mr. J. C. Myrick, Chairman; the Rev. R. W. Smith (then pastor at Balboa); and Messrs. C. W. Duey, E. D. Stilwell, W. H. Kromer, and J. C. Wimmer. A beautiful spirit prompted the reunion and farewell party which subsequently took place in the old Pedro Miguel building before it was torn down. With the Rev. R. W. Smith presiding at this festive gathering, the fountains of good fellowship flowed freely, with much reminiscing in order. On July 29, 1934, a new building was dedicated by the Rev. R. W. Smith. The following January, however, the records show a need to replace the temporary paper roof with a permanent one, and this, together with a new front entrance was accomplished in 1939. Rededication services were held with Dr. Guild presiding, and Mr. Kromer, President of the Union Church of the Canal Zone, and Mr. N. M. Shaw, Chairman of the Local Council at Pedro Miguel, giving the addresses.

Meanwhile, in 1936 the Canal had notified the Gatun Church that the space occupied by its parsonage was needed for new

Canal buildings. There was a salvage recovery of only \$30 for the old structure, which together with its furnishings and other equipment, represented an expenditure of over \$4,000! The new building program of the Canal involved also the razing of the old government building in which the Gatun Church services had been held. Thus, January, 1936 found the Gatun Church leaders questing for a lot, and a year later, letting a building contract. The structure was completed in 1938 and dedicated by Dr. Guild on January 22, 1939.

During 1937, President W. H. Kromer led in the organization of a Church School in Gamboa. This he continued to direct until local leadership was enlisted. The Church School was designed and destined to grow into another Union Church. Almost simultaneously a Woman's Auxiliary was organized.

Program Quiescence

During this period the progress of the maturing movement appears to have slumped. A temporary factor in this may have been the departure of Mr. H. A. A. Smith, long-time President of the Council and a man of unusual vision, capacity, and devotion. Records show that the Executive Council of the Union Church of the Canal Zone held meetings only semi-annually, or annually. In the year 1924, the combined budgets of all churches including amounts remitted to the General Council aggregated only \$12,780. Some of the churches grew languid. There is evidence in 1928-29 that the church at Pedro Miguel was without a pastor and seems to have had negligible interest in securing one. For a time the Church School was the one evidence of vitality. In turn, this was led by the following persons, all of Balboa: Messrs. W. H. Kromer, R. S. Carter, J. C. Wimmer, and H. A. McConaughey. At the close of 1929, this church was in arrears on its payments to the Executive Council. Mr. Myrick is recorded to have given assurance that such arrearage would be met, but requested that Pedro Miguel be excused from contributing to the central organization's benevolence budget for 1930. That budget totalled only \$2,330, and two years later it had dropped to a new low of \$1,430! Further evidence of the low tide is seen in Gatun's failure during 1927 to support a pastor; and in the

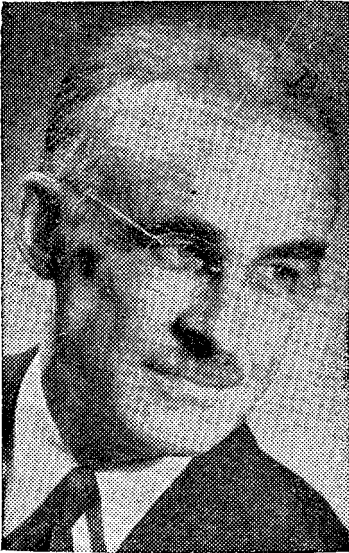
failure of the sister churches to make an effort to provide appropriate assistance, as well.

The Committee on Religious Work on the Canal Zone

The records, throughout a long period, reveal the untiring service of Dr. Guild, Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and Secretary of its Committee on Religious Work on the Canal Zone. Two of his most notably helpful visits were made in 1932 and in 1936. Both times he was accompanied by Mrs. Guild, and on the latter visit by Dr. and Mrs. King of the Presbyterian Board, also. Immediately prior to his retirement he raised the question of a building for the Gamboa church and personally conferred with Mr. John D. Rockefeller and representatives of the E. S. Harkness Estate, asking gifts for this purpose. These great philanthropists were interested, and late in 1941, Dr. Samuel McCrae Cavert reported \$12,000 available for the Gamboa building with a likelihood of an additional \$4,000 if there were any assurance that the building would soon be erected. The latter proved impossible because of war-born shortage of materials.

Meanwhile the Gamboa church continued to add actively to its Building Fund.

In May, 1941, Dr. and Mrs. Cavert began a busy and helpful week addressing meetings, and giving counsel in conferences. At the same time they were gaining first-hand knowledge of life in the Canal Zone and learning the personnel needs and programs of its Union Churches. Dr. Cavert's interest, thus deepened, has continued. The year 1941 also brought Dr. A. W. Wasson of the Methodist Board, and Bishop Ivan Lee Holt, formerly President of the Federal Council. Two years before had wit-



The Rev. Samuel Mc. Cavert, D.D.

nessed the appearance of Dr. Detweiler of the Northern Baptist Board, an active member of the Federal Council's Committee on Religious Work on the Canal Zone.

The original President of this Committee was E. E. Olcott, President of the Hudson River Day Line. Later he became Honorary Chairman, with the Rev. James R. Smith, Chairman; Dr. David C. Wylie, Vice-chairman; Dr. Roy B. Guild, Secretary; and Mr. A. R. Kimball, Treasurer. Active members were the Rev. A. W. Anthony and Dr. James Kittell. In such matters as raising Building Funds, selecting pastors, and giving advice on comprehensive policies, the Committee has ever been of appreciable help.

Extracurricular

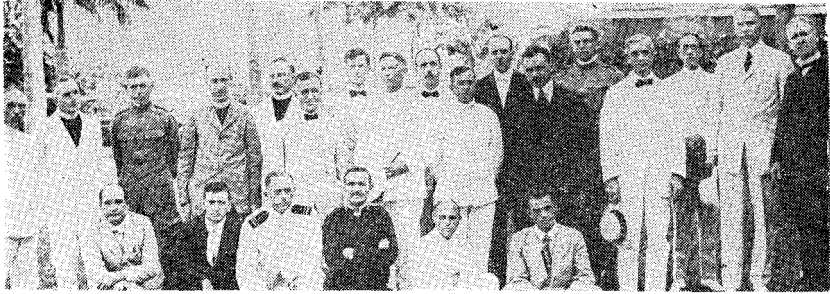
The Panama Federation of Women's Societies for Christian Service began with six cooperating units on March 6, 1914, in the now abandoned town of Empire. Currently, there are eighteen groups actively involved, one half of which are affiliated with the Union Churches. The semi-annual sessions have both morning and afternoon programs, in which speakers on religious topics are heard, reports made, and devotional services conducted. Gifts to worthy missionary enterprises are collected and relayed. The groups involved alternate as hostesses. The Federation's Watchword is "*Laborers Together with God.*"

The Isthmian Religious Workers' Federation is an inclusive



The Isthmian Minister's Association—1911

Top Row: S. Moss Loveridge, (Baptist, Colon); Kennedy; Charles Purdy (Gatun).
 Second Row: Stephen Witt; J. L. Wise (Bapt., Colon, Gorgona); Gray (Meth.); Charles
 Ports; Cook.
 Bottom Row: A. A. Nellis (Empire); Carl H. Elliott (Cristobal and Las Cascades); —.



The Isthmian Religious Workers—1921

Top Row: Left to Right, Rev. Benjamin Knapp (Union); 2 —; 3 —; 4 —; 5 —; 6, Rev. Raymond R. Gregory; 7, Tom Booz; 8 —; 9, Rev. Stephen Witt (Bapt.); 10 Miller (Union, Gatun Chap.); 11, Rev. James Brownlee (Meth. Miss.); 12, Rev. Paul Joy (Presby.); 13 —; 14, Rev. U. S. Brown (Supt. Meth. Miss.); 15, Rev. Vernon L. Eggleston (YMCA, Cristobal); 16, H. A. A. Smith (Union); 17, Bishop Thirkield (Meth.).
 Bottom Row: 1, Walter D. Eastman (YMCA, Balboa); 2, Rev. Edwin Oliver (Meth. and Union); 3, —; 4, Peter Terrace (Salvation Army); 5, Rev. Charles Mitchell (Gatun Union); 6, Rev. Newman Powell (Meth.).

group in which the Union Church staff members have fellowshiped with neighboring pastors, social workers, Y. M. C. A. leaders, military Chaplains, missionaries, and others. The membership is open to all religious organizations operating internationally, regardless of race and color. Known to have been included are: Bahai, Baptist, Church of God, Christian (Disciples), Congregational, Episcopal, Four-Square Gospel, Jewish, Lutheran, Methodist, Nazarene, Old Catholic, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, and Wesleyan Methodist (English). Many of the members are maintained in the Republic of Panama by Foreign Missions Boards. Worship and fellowship constitute the major objectives, with an occasional community project receiving attention. The meetings, held monthly, are addressed by a wide variety of speakers on subjects of religious interest. Frequently a speaker of international prominence, in the area for special lectures or enroute to another part of the world, is heard.

Unfortunately, none but contemporary records are available. Correspondence, however, from the personal files of the Rev. R. R. Gregory of the American Bible Society, whose local service extends back some thirty years, reveals the organization in existence in 1911. At that time it was known as the Isthmian Ministerial Association. The composite memory of the very few persons who have been in the group longer than a decade has