

Pastor-at-Large in the German Work for Six Years



Rev. Edward Grauman

When we look ahead, six years seem to be a long period of time and one would almost conclude that a little eternity is wrapped up in its passing. However, when we take the backward look we realize the brevity and swiftness and we agree with the Psalmist, "It is faster than the weaver's shuttle." Time simply means new opportunities and privileges are ours to share and enjoy. Time is rendering a service both to men and God; and service rendered is the yardstick of Christ to evaluate life and to measure its usefulness. This is not only true as it relates itself to the individual person but also in relationship to churches. It is not a question whether or not I am a person or a church but what am I doing with life and as a church to bring the impact of God's love to the human heart.

In my traveling to and from the different churches and conversations with ministers and laymen, I have often heard the ill-drawn conclusion: "Our churches are dying a slow death." This is an expression used to denote that our work is slowly losing itself in the current of other denominations, and our people are seeking to give expression of their religious convictions outside their mother church. It is regrettably true that in the current of

population shift our people too, many of them, changed residence as well as denominational fellowship. Such changes I find are so often due to lack of loyalty, steadfastness and faithfulness. Let's be honest, and in our honesty we must conclude that our fellowship is as basic, sound and dynamic as any other denomination. Our fellowship is as a finger pointing us to Christ in whom our hope rests, and no other denomination can do more. "We preach Christ crucified."

It is also true that in so many instances we are losing our grip upon our youth of today because of more than one reason. Our young people no longer feel the ties of common nationality as keenly as did the former generation and which played so significant a role in uniting our work and forming it into a distinct organization. They are losing the sense of racial consciousness and are seeking to widen the boundaries of their experiences and enriching their lives through wider comradeship than those afforded them by their present mother church. Knowing and seeing these things come to pass, our churches ought to arouse themselves and leave no stone unturned in order to keep them within the fold. The language question has harmed us more in driving our youth from us than has any other single item of the day, and unless we prepare ourselves to meet this challenge the future of our churches is not too promising. A church is no language institution but rather an institution to enlist boys and girls, men and women, for the Kingdom of God.

Not only has the language question played a significant role in losing our grip upon our young people but also the social side of life. While we have placed our main emphasis upon the spiritual side, and rightly so, we have neglected the social emphasis and its value. Ministers have been bound, because of differences of opinion and outlook by members within the church, to put on a social program of such a nature that would encourage our youth to remain loyal to our church. When such functions could not be enjoyed they were attracted to churches where they could be had and we suffered the loss. A

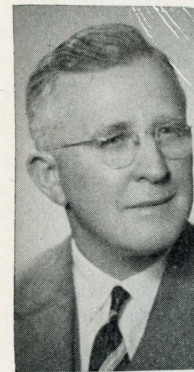
good, clean social program for entertainment is often a magnetism to draw young people to the church and to open the way to sow into their heart and life the good seed of God's Eternal Word. By this I do not mean extremities but educational functions and entertainment—visual aid, slides, clean fun, etc. Some of our churches have for this reason built educational buildings in which they also enjoy the social side of life, and they have kept their youth and won others for the church.

During the six years in the general work, I have discovered that our people are beginning to build better churches and parsonages. Churches that are equipped to meet the needs of the day. Nine new churches and six new parsonages were built in my district. The cost ranges from \$20,000 to \$115,000 in the building of churches and from \$6,000 to \$16,000 for parsonages. This too, seems to me, is cause to believe that our work is not dy-

ing but very much alive.

It is also noteworthy to state that our people have not lost the warmth and zeal for missions. In the past years many churches have given liberally and sacrificially in order that the Kingdom of God shall not suffer because of financial reasons. Our people are giving liberally for the Aged Ministers' Fund. The Sunday morning offerings are now at a higher level than ever before in the history of our work. In the coming year our denomination, because of need and expansion, has resolved to raise \$4,500,000 for the Church Building Fund. Our churches will be contacted and asked to do their part. May our expectations not be betrayed. For the church of Jesus Christ must go on and the funds are needed if the church is to make itself known and felt throughout the world. May God bless us in our togetherness as we endeavor to build His church and kingdom. —Rev. Edward Grauman.

As I Observe Conditions in Our Churches



Rev. B. H. Rissler

More than four years have passed since I accepted the position as one of the pastors-at-large for the German work. Time has a way of slipping by very rapidly, and when one looks back he wonders just what has been accomplished. I would like, however, to make a few observations concerning the work in general.

Let us examine the need which is evident among our churches.

First and uppermost there is a crying need for more pastors. In my field at the present time there are between eight to ten churches and parishes without ministers. It has been a surprise to me to see some churches continue to function and to hold their membership though they have been without the leadership of a pastor for years. It perhaps goes to show that churches, however, are beginning to show signs of disintegration and death, and if

they do not receive adequate leadership in the not too distant future, death is inevitable.

Another need is for more adequate equipment and facilities for the work in the Sunday School. Too often the entire Sunday School meets in one large room. As a result there is so much noise and confusion that it becomes almost impossible to hear or to be heard in the various classes. Some of our churches are beginning to remedy this situation. It is encouraging to note that churches which have built new houses of worship recently have planned for better facilities.

The method used in many of our churches to raise the finances or funds of the church is certainly inadequate. When our people came to this country there were very few well to do among them. The method used to assess each member to contribute the same amount toward the church worked well then, but because of conditions which have developed among us, this method is no longer fair nor adequate. When the poor widow is expected to contribute as much as the wealthy among us, it is time for honest evaluation. In all fairness, one must say