

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
KANSAS RURAL INSTITUTIONS:
V. THREE EFFECTIVE RURAL CHURCHES

By F. D. FARRELL

Potentially the rural church is one of the most important factors for the improvement of agriculture and rural life. Its influence affects not only the affairs and the inhabitants of the countryside but also the national welfare. Its importance is not generally given adequate recognition.

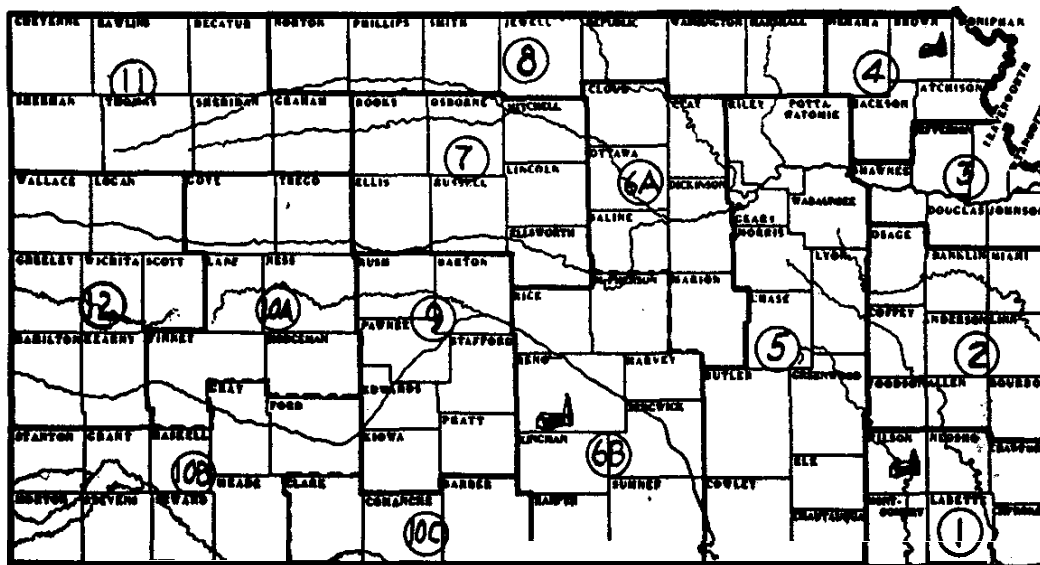


Figure 1.--Map of Kansas showing type-of-farming areas and the locations of the three rural churches, indicated by the tops of the steeples.

Whether a rural church is good, bad, or indifferent, whether it is active or inactive, it exerts an influence, for good or for ill, upon its immediate neighborhood and upon the general welfare. Whether the influence is beneficial or the reverse depends upon what the church does or fails to do. Even an unused church may be influential, negatively.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RURAL CHURCH

The main function of the rural church is, of course, to foster religion. When the church is effective it does this by serving as a center of formal worship, by providing religious inspiration, guidance, and instruction, by providing

outlets for certain benevolent impulses, and in various other ways.

But the rural church has additional functions, each of which may strengthen the exercise of the main function and also contribute, directly or indirectly, to local and national well-being. It may help to improve human relations--as between parents and children, town and country, landowner and tenant, farmer and farm hand, borrower and lender. It may help to increase respect for the earth and its resources and so promote conservation of those resources, upon which national well-being depends. It may aid in the proper nurture of farm boys and girls, many of whom carry to careers in urban centers the ideals, attitudes, and habits they develop in the countryside.

The above statements merely suggest why the rural church is important, nationally as well as locally.

THREE EXAMPLES

The three rural institutions discussed herein are examples of rural churches that are making substantial, positive, helpful contributions of the kind indicated above. It may be that a discussion of these institutions will be helpful to individuals, groups, and organizations interested in developing increased usefulness of rural churches.

Kansas has many effective rural churches. The three discussed herein exemplify three somewhat different methods of operation. They are situated in dissimilar communities, each of which is representative of a fairly large area of the state. While they exemplify three successful methods, it should not be assumed that these are the only successful methods. Each of the three institutions is indigenous to its own environment, a product of the people and the conditions of its community.

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

It is important to recognize that the conditions discussed in this report are those observed in the three communities during a period of several months ended in October, 1948. These conditions are not static. They are subject to change. In each community they may improve or they may deteriorate, as a result of changes in one or more factors. A change of ministers; the introduction of a new industry that brings in new and different social elements or economic forces; a change of social dominance from an older to, a younger generation; the development of cleavages--sometimes as a result of what seem to be trivial incidents--within a community; --any of these or of other similar factors may bring change. The change may be for good or for ill. As truly as eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, so is it the price of preserving whatever is good in rural community affairs, and of making whatever is good even better.

THE THREE COMMUNITIES

Figure 1 is a map of Kansas showing the state's type-of-farming areas. High Prairie Church is in Wilson County in the northwestern corner of Area 1. Partridge Community Church is at the center of Reno County in Area 6B. Zion Church is in Brown County, in Area 4.

In 1942, Pleasant Valley and Guilford townships, in which most of the members of High Prairie Church live, had populations of 521 and 310, respectively, almost all living on farms. Center township (Partridge Community) had a population of 562, of which 210 lived in the village of Partridge and 352 lived on farms. Irving township (Zion) had a population of 717. This township is exclusively agricultural. It contains no mercantile nor manufacturing establishments, not even a filling station, and only two churches.

The above data show that the three communities are definitely rural and predominantly agricultural. In their essentials, they are typical of thousands of American rural communities.

The Agriculture.--The data in Table 1 give some indication of the nature of the agriculture in each of the three communities. The three represent three different type-of-farming areas¹ as classified by the agricultural economists of Kansas State College. High Prairie community is in Area 1, a general farming area with an extensive acreage of hay and pasture. It produces livestock, poultry, dairy cattle, and cash grain, and is relatively self-sufficient, agriculturally. Partridge community is in Area 6B, where major emphasis is upon wheat in a system of general farming, but where there is also considerable livestock. Zion community, in Area 4, places major emphasis on corn in a Corn Belt type of agriculture. The data in Table 1 are from the townships in which most of the church members live. They are based on records made available by the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. The data are for the year 1942, when the farms were out of the depression but not quite into the war economy.

In general, in all three communities the farms are large enough to be economically feasible and not too large to justify classification as family-size farms. Most of them in all three communities keep milk cows and chickens, both commonly indicators of family occupancy and family operation. The number of persons living on each farm varies considerably, but averages between three and four.

The figures showing average annual rainfall, as reported by the United States Weather Bureau for the weather stations nearest the three communities, indicate one of the factors in making the agriculture of each community what it is. Practical adjustment of the agriculture and the rural life of the three communities to this factor, to the soil conditions, and

¹ Described in detail in Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 251, Types of Farming in Kansas, August, 1936.

to other features of the environment has been made and is still being made by the people who occupy the areas.

Land Tenure.--Reports of the United States Bureau of the Census state that in 1945 the proportion of tenancy on the 141,192 farms in Kansas was 36.6 percent. The same reports contain the following figures showing the proportion of tenancy in each of the three Kansas counties in which the three churches are situated: Wilson (High Prairie), 36.9 percent; Reno (Partridge Community), 38.3 percent; and Brown (Zion), 45.9 percent.

Table 1. Agricultural Data from the Three Church Communities in 1942.

Items	High Prairie (Pleasant Valley and Guilford Townships)	Partridge Community (Center) Township)	Zion (Irving Township)
Number of farms reporting	148	88	159
Average size of these farms, acres	263	268	195
Most common size of farm, acres	160	320	160
Number of farms of this size	38	15	36
Percentage of farm acreage devoted to:			
Corn	9	2	33
Wheat	6	41	12
Oats	9	6	12
Flax	6	—	—
Pasture	40	12	13
Red Clover	—	—	4
Alfalfa	3	3	4
Soybeans	2	—	2
Prairie hay	5	—	—
Sorghums, grain and forage	6	9	0.5
Percentage of farms, marketing beef cattle	25	80	25
Average number of beef cattle sold from these farms	15	8	49
Percentage of farms having milk cows	88	83	88
Average number of milk cows on these farms	5.5	5.2	3.8
Percentage of farms having brood sows	62	48	60
Average number of brood sows on these farms	3	3.8	4
Percentage of farms having chickens	90	87	85
Average number of chickens on these farms	191	222	194
Average human population	3.50	3.75	3.36
Average annual rainfall, Inches	39.45	28.53	30.97

For 1948, according to reports by the ministers, the corresponding figures for the farm families belonging to the three churches differ somewhat from the county figures for 1945. Of the farm families belonging to High Prairie Church, fewer than 10 percent are tenants, a much smaller proportion than for Wilson County. The low figure is due in

part to the fact that in many instances when the farmers have become superannuated they have conveyed their farms to their sons, who now carry on as owner-operators. Among the farm families belonging to Partridge Community Church and those belonging to Zion Church, tenancy approximates 40 percent, not greatly different from the county figures. It is of interest to note that 27 percent of the Zion farm families and more than 30 percent of the Partridge Community farm families operate both their own farms and additional land which they lease.

The data from the three communities show no correlation between the proportion of tenancy as such and the welfare of the rural churches. They, together with the achievements of the churches, indicate clearly that a rural church may be constructively effective whether the proportion of tenancy among its members is high or low. In the three communities farm tenure of both owner-operators and tenant-operators is well stabilized. This, of course, is important as a factor for stability of church membership and of church and community activities.

The People.--In each of the three communities the people are typical of those in many other rural areas. At High Prairie family names indicate a high percentage of British and Irish origin and a sprinkling of Scandinavian and German. Nearly all the church members are farmers. At Partridge also, British and Irish family names predominate, but there are small numbers of German, Swiss, and Scandinavian names. About two-thirds of the church members are farmers. The others follow various occupations, or live in retirement, in Partridge. At Zion the names of Germanic origin compose a large majority. There are few British and Irish names. Virtually all the church members are farmers.

In all three communities the people are first of all American and Christian. They may be somewhat above the average of American rural communities in sturdiness and industry, though they are in no sense unique. They represent the high quality segment of the American countryside. They are hard-working, land-loving, self-reliant, kindly, and progressive. Several of the farm homes have attractive libraries of good books showing signs of use. A large proportion of the farms are electrified and extensively mechanized. Predominantly the people appear to combine sobriety with good fellowship, industry with cheerfulness, and piety with a sense of humor.

In short, the people of the three communities are of high quality, ability, and spirit. They are the kind of people who usually devise means of meeting their own community needs. Fortunately there are thousands of American rural communities with similar populations.

ORIGINS OF THE THREE CHURCHES

It is significant that all three churches are indigenous to their environments. Their establishment was caused, not by official directives or pressures from outside the communities, but by the desires of the local people who acted on their own initiative. In their origins, and to a preponderant extent in their subsequent development, the three churches are native to their environments and expressive of the aspirations of the local people. It is important to recognize this fact, for it has much to do with the ways in which the three institutions have developed and functioned from their beginnings to the present time.

High Prairie.--A desire to provide a Sunday school for the children led to the establishment of High Prairie Church. A Sunday school was organized in the community on April 1, 1878, at High Prairie schoolhouse (District 51)². The erection of school buildings preceded that of church buildings in the region, presumably because tax revenues could be made available for financing school buildings. "School buildings," Mr. Roney says, "frequently served as centers for Sunday schools and places for public worship." At the High Prairie schoolhouse both "Sunday school and preaching services were held regularly until 1883."

On April 1, 1882, a meeting was held at the schoolhouse to make arrangements to obtain a church charter and to consider a church building. "An adequate church edifice," says Mr. Roney, "was a growing necessity, and the fact was generally recognized." The meeting voted to build a 30' x 40' stone church at the northeast corner of section 9, township 28, range 16. Later the decision regarding building material was changed and a frame building was decided upon. The site selected at the meeting on April 1, 1882, is still the site of High Prairie Church. Those present at the meeting on the date mentioned rejected a proposal for a union church.

On July 1, 1882, a charter was filed with the secretary of state. The articles of incorporation specify that the name of the institution shall be "Methodist Episcopal Church of High Prairie" ; provide that there shall be not fewer than three or more than nine trustees; and name a capitalization of \$1,000. Indicating that the founders expected a fair degree of permanence, the term covered is stated as 9,999 years.

Partridge Community.--On December 7, 1873, a group of Reno County people interested in setting up a Church of Christ, Congregationalist, met at the home of the Rev. S. D. Storrs in the village of Reno Center. The minutes of the meeting state that on motion it was "voted to name it The First Church of Christ of Reno Center and that its polity

² Most items of the early history given here are from an Informal 8-page statement by M. T. Roney, of Benedict, an early-day participant in High Prairie affairs.

(sic.) be Congregational". There were 16 charter members: 6 named Dilley, 3 Ghormley, 2 O'Hara, 2 Chapman, 1 O'Daniel, and 1 Storrs. At the first meeting the group voted to invite one of their own members, the Rev. Samuel Dilley, to serve as minister for one year.

By the end of the first year there were 72 members. Of these, 24 were former members of other Congregationalist churches, 5 were United Presbyterians, 3 were Presbyterians, 5 were Methodists, and 35 entered by confession of faith. Thus from the beginning by admitting members of various faiths the church revealed something of the qualities of a community church. At a quarterly meeting on November 20, 1886, it was voted to remove the church from Reno Center to Partridge. The removal took place in 1887.

On April 6, 1924, following a unanimous vote expressed earlier, "the old Congregational church was disbanded and the membership and church property were formed into the Partridge Community Church," according to a statement published by the latter. At a church meeting held February 3, 1924, a motion "that we remain as we are, a Congregational church" was lost and a motion "that we join with the M. E. organization in some form of community church" was carried. The unanimous vote referred to above was had on February 17, 1924, at a meeting attended by members of the Partridge Congregational Church, the Partridge Methodist Episcopal Church, and several citizens affiliated with neither of these, the only churches in the community.

As at High Prairie, the welfare of young people was an important consideration in the setting up of Partridge Community Church. The two Partridge churches--the Congregational and the Methodist were--attempting to serve a community too small to support the two adequately with either membership or funds. The young people, who on week days attended school together, were divided on Sundays into two Sunday school and church groups, each too small for satisfactory activity. A second consideration was a financial one. The people decided that one strong, well-supported church was preferable to two less strong and less well-supported churches.

The movement for a community church was definitely a "grass roots" movement. It came from the people of the community, chiefly Congregationalists and Methodists but also members of various other Protestant denominations. It appealed both to the practicality of the adults and to the gregariousness of their children.

Zion.--In the late 1870's a small group of German-speaking Methodist farmers began to migrate, a family or two at a time, from Holt County, in northwestern Missouri, to Brown

County, in northeastern Kansas.³ Feeling the need for religious worship and unable to understand the services conducted in English in whatever churches were available to them in their new environment, they began to hold prayer and testimonial meetings on Sundays in one another's homes. This practice continued until the late spring of 1881, when the farmers succeeded in inducing a German Methodist minister from their former community in Missouri to come and conduct church services occasionally in farm homes of the Brown County community. During the summer of 1881, the visiting minister organized the local farmers into a church with a membership of 13.

In September, 1881, the West German Methodist Conference formally recognized the little group as Zion Church. The conference appointed for part-time service at Zion a minister who already was serving congregations at Oregon, Missouri, and White Cloud, Kansas. Services for Zion were conducted by this minister one Sunday each month. On the remaining Sundays, a farmer and amateur preacher, John A. Meyer, conducted the services. The group met during the early years in a public building, Hill Top School.

In two years the membership was increased by additional German-speaking immigrants to a total of about 20. By 1891, the need for a church-owned building was recognized by the church members. In 1892 the original section of the present structure was built, at a cost of \$1,800. In 1900, a parsonage was built on the church property. In the early years the minister occupying the parsonage performed the janitorial service at the church in payment for his occupancy. By 1910, the membership had increased to 60. At about that time, the services gradually shifted from the German language to English. The change was made primarily for the benefit of the children, who to an increasing extent used and understood only English.

Features in Common.--The above brief sketch of origins shows that the three churches have certain early-stage features in common. They all sprang from the "grass roots." The welfare of children has been an important, sometimes a dominant, consideration in each. Extensive use was made by all three in their early years of public schoolhouses for Sunday school and church services. References to other features common to the three churches are made elsewhere in this report.

SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

The services of each church to its community fall into three categories: religious, social, agricultural. The three overlap extensively, as they should.

³ The data regarding the early history of Zion Church were obtained from a 7-page historical sketch written in 1931 by John E. Wehrman, a member of the church since 1887, and in an interview with Mr. Wehrman in September, 1948.

The religious services include the church service for worship and devotions; the Sunday school; the pastoral services to individuals and families including weddings, funerals, and similar events, and the providing of sympathy and spiritual consolation to the ill and the otherwise distressed; various religious activities of men's, women's, and youths' organizations sponsored by the church; and the religious instruction of church members and of those preparing to enter the church.

The social services include a wide variety of activities centering chiefly in the Sunday school and the various church-sponsored adult and youth groups. These activities frequently are intermingled with the secular activities of these groups. The social activities are designed to promote friendly association and wholesome recreation and to develop good will and increased understanding.

The agricultural services are composed chiefly of sponsorship by the church of groups directly interested in the agriculture and the rural homes of the community, and of various aids provided by the church for these groups, such as a meeting place with heat, light, water, and facilities for preparing and serving food. Not infrequently food prepared and served by one church-sponsored group is consumed by another group, which may or may not be church-sponsored.

All three categories of service in one way or another are aimed at community betterment. The net effect of all three is to make each community a better place to live and to gain a livelihood, and to enhance the value of the community's contribution to the general welfare.

In the three sections immediately following, examples are given of the three kinds of service by each of the three churches.

Religious Services.--The religious services of the three churches are closely similar. Typically, Sunday worship includes a program of music, prayer, a scripture lesson, a sermon, responsive reading, and brief announcements. Usually the sermon is by the regular minister, but guest ministers and other guest speakers are used to a considerable extent.

There are various special "days" involving the Sunday services. One impressive special service is given on the annual reunion Sunday at High Prairie. On these occasions there are present numerous former members of the congregation who no longer live in the community but who return year after year for the annual reunion. These participate extensively and impressively in the giving of testimonials. Another special service is on Rural Life Day (Sunday) at Zion. On this occasion various rural organizations, such as 4-H Clubs, sponsored or aided by the church, participate in the program, musically and forensically.

Usually the Sunday school service immediately precedes

the regular service of worship. Under the direction of a lay superintendent and lay teachers, the Sunday school provides religious and theological instruction to classes of various age groups.

The pastoral activities are suggested in part by the following figures for the year 1947: sermons, 50 to 70 at each place; baptisms, 7 at High Prairie and 6 at Zion; funerals, 3 at High Prairie, 15 at Partridge Community and 2 at Zion; marriages, 2 at High Prairie, 15 at Partridge Community, and 5 at Zion. Pastoral calls ranged from about 100 at High Prairie to almost 500 (average of some 10 a week) at Zion.

The above figures and comments merely suggest the nature and extent of the religious services. Certainly, in each of the three communities the religious services are numerous, varied, and extensively and gratefully appreciated.

Social Services.--The social services are carried on chiefly by a variety of organized groups sponsored by the churches. Most of these groups have both religious and social functions.

At High Prairie there are the Women's Society for Christian Service, a group containing about 50 members and participating enthusiastically in various benevolent and social activities; a men's club of about 25 members functioning as a current events club, holding its meetings at the church and taking an active interest in a variety of subjects, including soil conservation; a youth fellowship; and a church-sponsored 4-H Club which functions chiefly in agriculture and the farm home but which also carries on important social activities.

At Partridge Community there are a Ladies Guild, a cultural and missionary organization; a Youth Fellowship functioning in religious, recreational and community service activities; a Partridge Community Club which provides a means of expressing the community's interests and aspirations--economically, culturally, and socially; and a Community Young Women's Christian Association, which sponsors religious and social activities among the high school girls of the community.

At Zion, there are the Women's Society for Christian Service; a Zion-affiliated women's unit of the county farm bureau; a Zion-sponsored 4-H Club, the Zion Zippers; a Young Adult group; and various others.

The activities of the groups named and of other similar groups entail in the aggregate a large quantity of helpful social service. Much of this service overlaps the religious services of the same groups and supplements effectively the religious services of the churches themselves. Not the least important social service of these churches is their functioning as "matrimonial bureaus." Several couples who are now pillars of the respective churches became couples as a result of association in church activities.

Agricultural Services.-- One way to suggest the philosophy underlying the agricultural services of the three churches is to quote from a declaration⁴ of the Kansas Conference of the Methodist Church at its annual session at Topeka in September, 1947:

“Whereas the Methodist Church is not the only agency interested in the welfare and development of the rural areas; that there are state and national agencies working for the betterment of rural life, such as 4-H, Home Demonstration agents, county agents, and U. S. Soil Conservation Service, also churches of other denominations--we recommend that our town and country pastors and officers of our boards and commissions discover these agencies and their agents and enter into cooperative endeavors with them. . . .”

The three churches discussed herein were applying effectively both the letter and the spirit of the conference recommendation well in advance of its publication in 1947. The support of the conference is, of course, helpful to the two Methodist churches in the conduct of their agricultural services. In issuing its recommendation, the conference acted wisely and in the public interest.

The writer's attention was first called to High Prairie as an effective rural church by a Kansas State College extension specialist, who had found the High Prairie Men's Club an element of strength in the conduct of a program of soil conservation in the community. As the place of the club's meetings, the church serves as the community's center for the discussion of soil conservation.

Since 1943, High Prairie has sponsored a 4-H Club of about 20 members, one-half of whom are girls. Under the local leadership of two adults belonging to the church, the club members conduct the usual type of 4-H Club projects in agriculture and rural homemaking. The club regularly holds its meetings at the church. With few exceptions its members are also members of the church's Youth Fellowship.

It was at a dinner meeting of the Partridge Community Club in the basement of the church that the writer first became impressed with Partridge Community's influence and usefulness. The meeting was called to consider soil conservation. Two speakers, one from the Soil Conservation Service and one from Kansas State College, were given excellent attention and there was much good discussion following the talks. The food, served by the Ladies Guild, was excellent. Fine community spirit and high appreciation for rural values were clearly evident.

Members of Partridge Community are prominent and numerous in the county farm bureau, in 4-H Club activities, in pure seed production, and in the Kansas Crop Improvement Association, whose president in 1948 was a member of the church. Several church members serve on rural school

⁴ Official Record, Kansas Conference, the Methodist Church, 1947, page 697.

boards. An unusually large proportion of the members are college graduates.

By stimulating, encouraging, and aiding its members, both on the farms and in the village of Partridge, the church contributes significantly to the agricultural welfare of the community. All but a few of the church members resident in the village are directly concerned with farming, either as farm owners or as persons engaged in providing services to

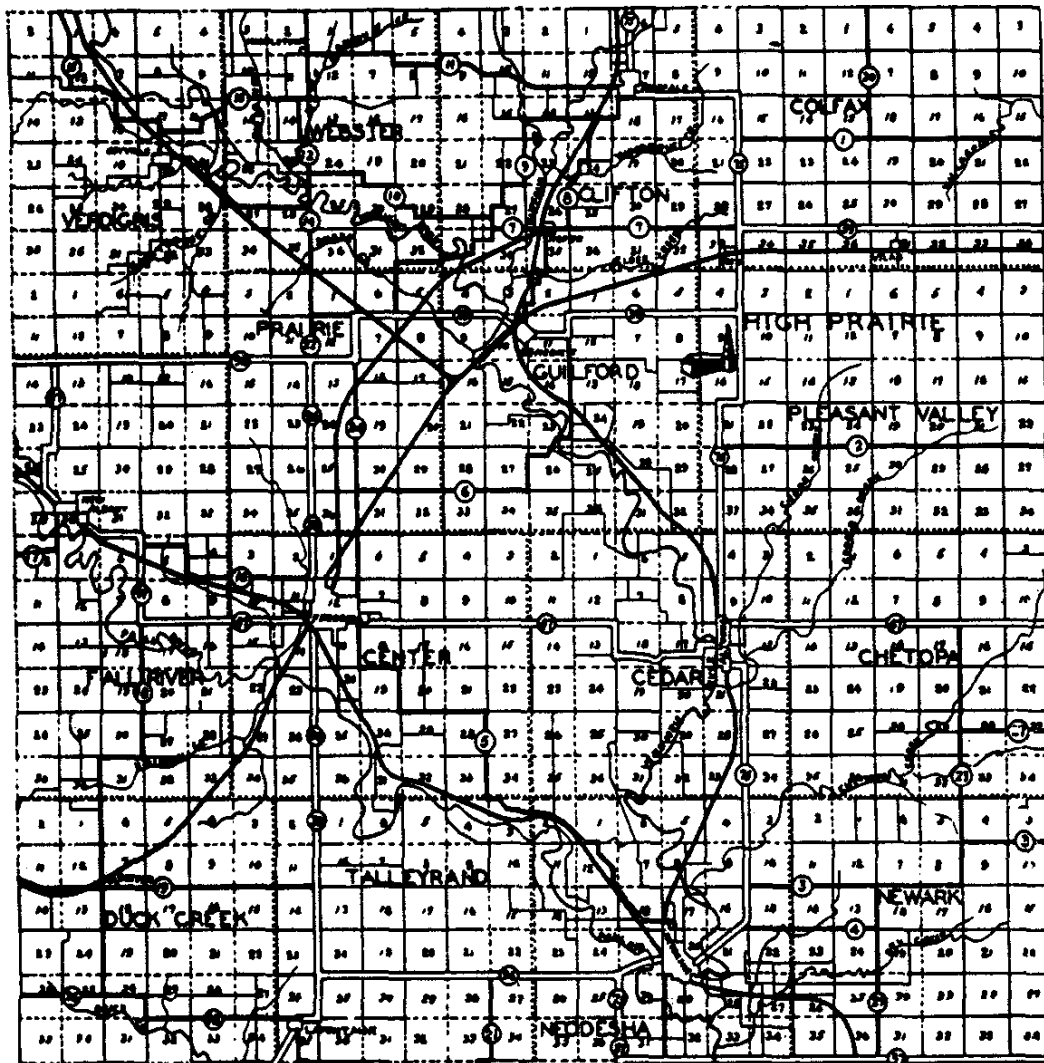


Figure 2.--Map of Wilson County showing the location of High Prairie Church, indicated by the top of the steeple.

the adjacent farms through such activities as transportation, grain storage, and merchandising.

Immersed as it is in a completely rural atmosphere, Zion Church is active in the service of agriculture and farm home life. It sponsors a 4-H Club of 17 members, to whom it gives special recognition from time to time, particularly on the annual Rural Life Sunday. The club holds some of its meetings at the church and some at the homes of club members.

Zion has close connections with the county farm bureau through the holding of bureau memberships by many mem-

bers of the church and through a close affiliation with the church of the local women's unit of the county farm bureau. The unit holds some of its meetings at the church and it cares for and improves the landscaping of the church grounds.

At the time of the writer's latest visit to the community, in September, 1948, the church was aiding in the development and promotion of a plan for better hospital facilities for the entire county. Such a plan is of great interest to most farm families throughout most of the Middle West. Several

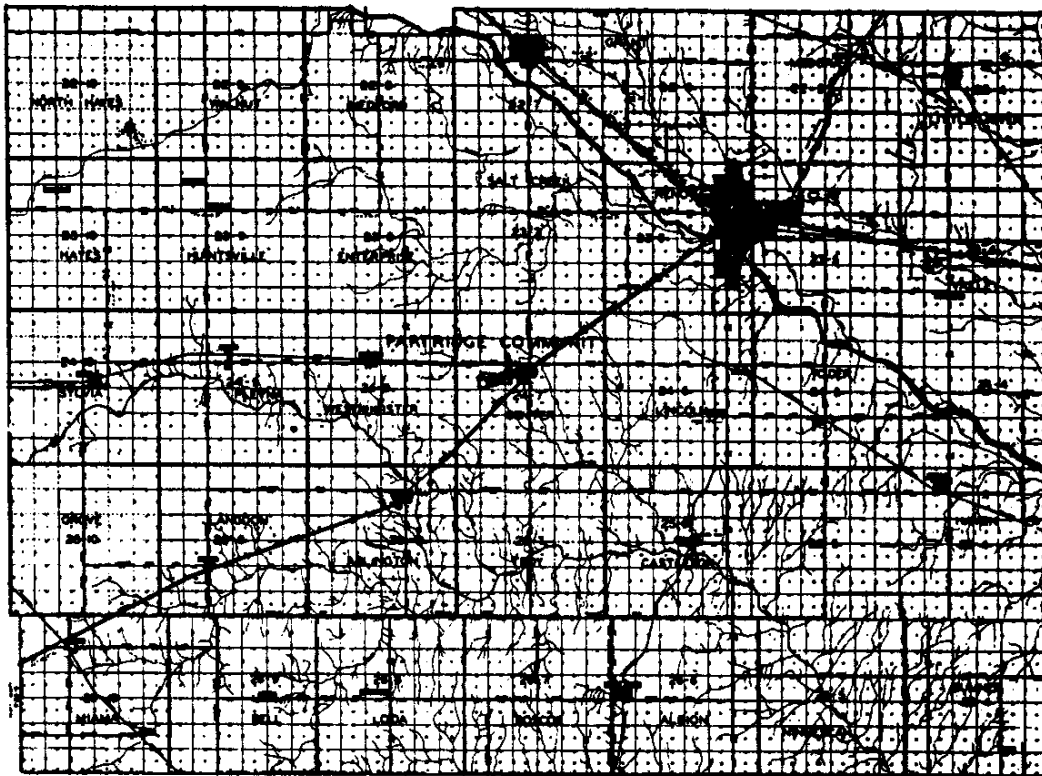


Figure 3.--Map of Reno County showing the location of Partridge Community Church, in the village shown at the right of the steeple.

church members serve on rural school boards.

The few examples given above should suffice to show that the three churches are giving valuable service in their respective communities, not only in matters of religion but also in the closely related areas of social and agricultural interest and importance.

PHYSICAL PLANT

The location, the size, and the nature of the physical plant are important to a rural church. The locations within the areas served, of the three institutions under consideration, are shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4.

High Prairie Church is situated on a tract of about four acres of land at the intersection of U. S. Highway 75 and State Highway 39, in Pleasant Valley Township, Wilson County, about 12 miles west of Chanute, Neosho County. The tract is well wooded, and, grass thrives in the open spaces.

In 1945, the church building was removed from a corner of the tract to a spot nearer the center, set up above a new and commodious basement whose walls of brick and concrete blocks serve as a foundation for the one-story frame superstructure, 30 x 40 feet in floor dimensions.

The main floor has a platform for the choir and pulpit and a seating capacity of 120. The basement is filled with

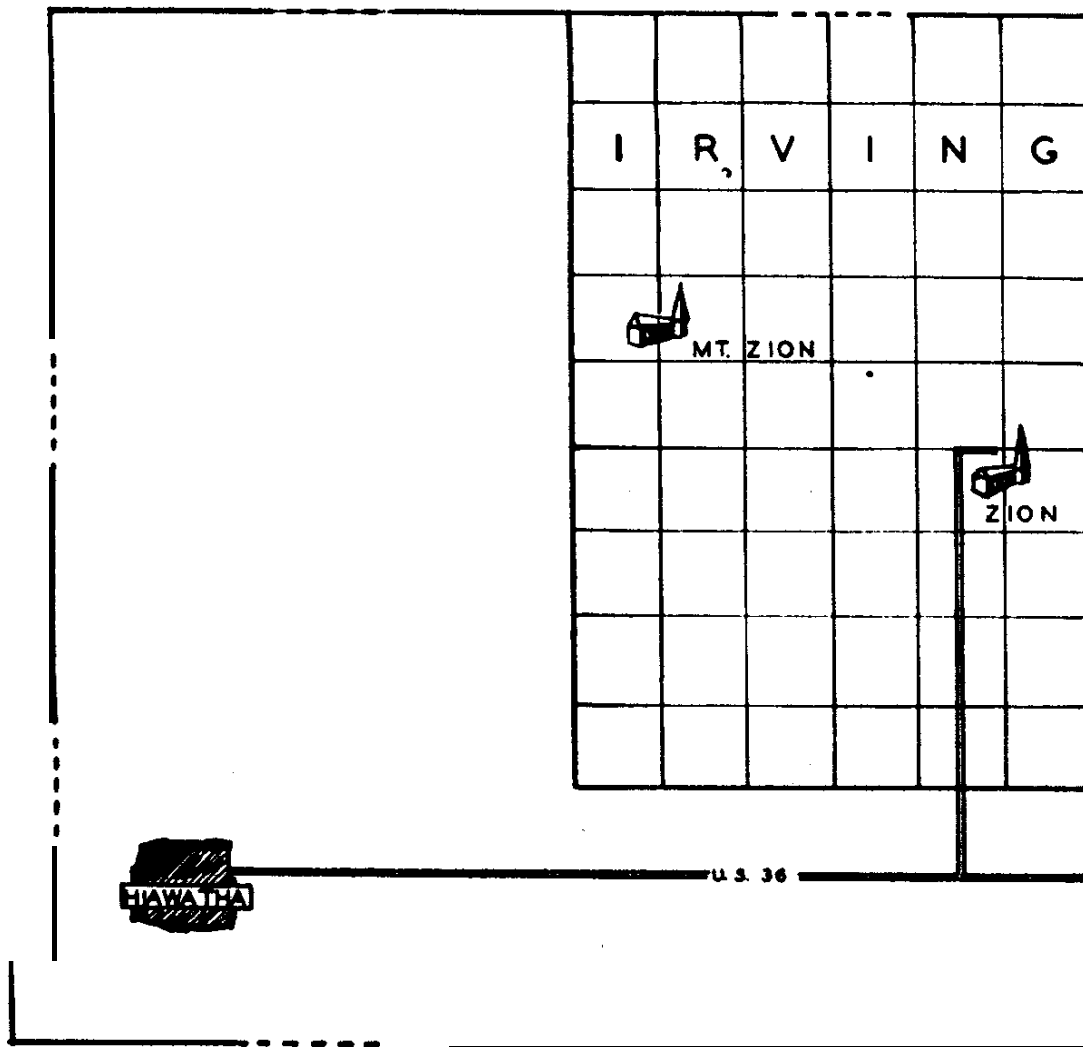


Figure 4.--Sketch of Irving township in the northeastern corner of Brown County, showing the locations of Zion and Mount Zion, the only churches in the township, and the roads leading from Zion Church to Hiawatha, the county seat.

a heating plant, a kitchen, and facilities for dinners, Sunday school classes, and small-group meetings such as those of the 4-H Club. A picture of the church as it appeared in 1948 is shown in Figure 5. The building recently has been electrified. The treasurer's record shows that the removal and remodeling of the building in 1945 cost \$6,234, of which \$3,734 was cash and the remainder voluntary labor.

On the official record of the Kansas Conference the property was listed in 1947 at \$5,500 for the site and the building and its contents. This is an extremely conservative valua-

tion. In addition, the church owns a beautifully kept five-acre cemetery one-half mile south and on the opposite side of Highway 75. The cemetery is operated by an association



Figure 5.--A view of the front of High Prairie Church and a part of the congregation.



Figure 6.--A view of Partridge Community Church.

of lot-owners. Membership in the church is not required of lot-owners. For a parsonage the pastor uses a cottage, owned by another church which he serves part-time, situated six miles away in the village of Buffalo.

Partridge Community Church, a picture of which is shown

in Figure 6, is a brown brick structure built in 1926-27 at a cost of approximately \$25,000 in the village of Partridge, Center township, Reno County. Its auditorium with a seating capacity of 250, a reception room, a choir room, the pastor's study, and three classrooms occupy the first floor. In the basement there are classrooms and facilities for the preparation and serving of meals. The parsonage, situated on a four-acre tract three blocks from the church and purchased in 1935 for \$2,000, is shown in Figure 7. Both church and parsonage are electrified and modern. At Partridge Community, special care has been taken to provide and preserve landscape plantings--trees, shrubs, and grass. An



Figure 7.--A view of the parsonage of Partridge Community Church.

important recent addition to the church equipment is a motion picture projector and screen, used in providing entertainment, out of doors in the summer months, for the young people of the community.

Zion Church and parsonage are situated on a tract of about an acre of church-owned land in Irving township, Brown County. The church is a white frame structure approximately 60 x 40 feet. The auditorium seats 250. The basement contains facilities for preparation and serving of meals, but it is not so large as is desirable. The parsonage is a two-story white frame structure. It and the church are shown in Figure 8. The church uses coal for heating and the parsonage is heated by gas. Both are electrified from a rural electric transmission line. The site is fairly well landscaped.

In the Conference Report for 1947 the valuation of the church is reported as \$12,000 and that of the parsonage as

\$5,000. Both buildings are in need of paint and minor repairs, and this fact was receiving attention at the time of the study. Proposed improvements include some enlargement of the church building to provide more adequately for Sunday School classes and for meetings of church-sponsored organizations. In 1948, the church instituted a "Lord's Acre" project to raise funds to finance the needed improvements. The study was completed before the results for the first year were known.

In brief, each of the three churches has a physical plant that is reasonably adequate, but there is need for some improvements, particularly for a parsonage at High Prairie and for repairs and a moderate enlargement of the church building at Zion.

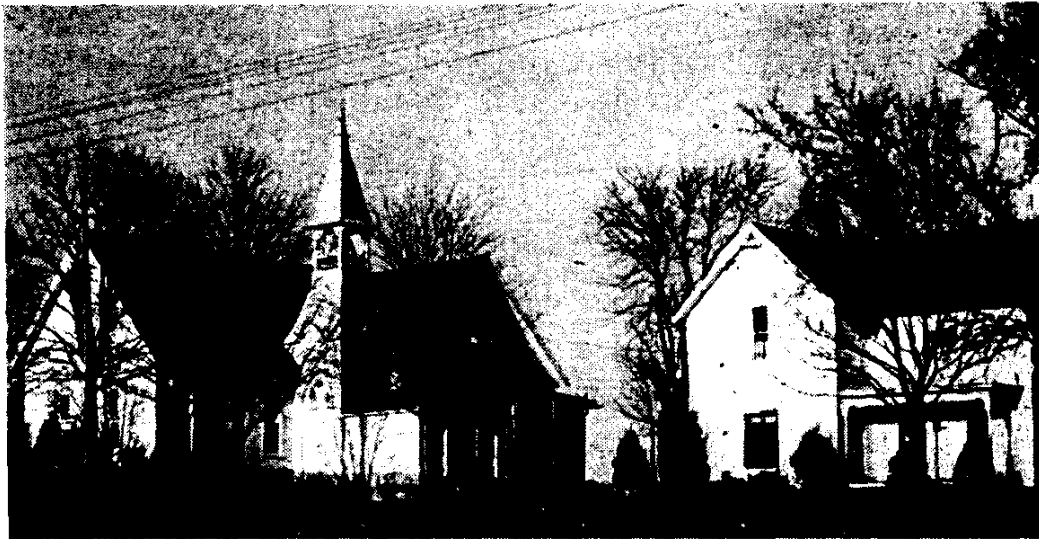


Figure 8.--A view of Zion Church and parsonage.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The areas served by the three churches being rather small and the farms in each area being large and so providing a relatively sparse population, it is to be expected that the number of members of each of the three churches would be small as compared to urban church memberships. In the three communities, as in thousands of other rural communities throughout the country, it is important to rely, not upon numbers but upon quality and devotion both in church affairs and in other rural group activities. This should be kept in mind when the following data on church membership are considered.

High Prairie.--It is only for the years since 1941, when data for High Prairie began to be published separately from those of other churches in the official church records, that membership figures for High Prairie Church can be clearly ascertained. It is clear, by implication, from Mr. Roney's

brief history⁵, that the early-day membership was not large. For example, at the meeting held on April 1, 1882, when it was decided to build a church, only seven persons were present. In July, 1883, a group of signers of an agreement to put the church on its feet financially contained only 59 persons. When this agreement proved ineffective, another agreement, entered into in January, 1892, was signed by only 69 persons.

Since 1941 official figures are available. In that year the present minister began his tenure. Since that time the church membership has grown steadily from 64 in 1941 to 113 in 1947. The church-school enrollment in 1947 was 81, of which number 43 were under 24 years of age.

Partridge Community.--Beginning as a Congregational church in 1873 with 15 members, Partridge Community Church has grown in membership as it has grown in years, though not always steadily and not without some setbacks. At the close of the year 1874, the membership was recorded as 72; but as recently as during the period March, 1910, to January, 1915, the largest number of members voting on the often controversial question of who should be pastor was 47, indicating a drop in membership since 1874. But during the past 10 years, mostly in the institution's second decade as a community church, the membership has grown moderately but persistently from 262 in 1939 to 339 in the autumn of 1948. The balance among the various age groups in the church is fairly steady and reflects closely the balance of the age groups in the community.

Zion.--From an initial membership of 13 at the time of its organization in 1881, Zion Church has enjoyed a fairly persistent growth in membership. By 1885 the membership had increased to 20. By 1910, it was 60. The burning of a nearby rural church as a result of lightning in 1921 led to the consolidation of the two congregations at Zion, increasing the membership beyond 125. During the 10 years ended with 1948, the membership has fluctuated between 250 and 300. Between one-fourth and one-third of the members are under 24 years of age.

To sum up: All three church groups are small; those at Partridge Community and at Zion are approximately three times as large as the High Prairie group; and each of the three groups includes a goodly proportion of young members.

ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT

Three facts stand out in relation to the organization and government of the three churches: (1) Notwithstanding its affiliation with a large church organization, each church exercises a high degree of autonomy; (2) a large number of members share the responsibility for the government of each

⁵ Cited above.

church; and (3) a large proportion of the members of each church share the responsibility for the conduct of the church's activities.

The two Methodist churches, High Prairie and Zion, belong to the Kansas Conference. The conference will lend aid, financially and otherwise, whenever such aid is necessary. It also assigns the ministers, determines general broad policies (for example, the policy of close cooperation between the rural church and the various public agencies engaged in the improvement of agriculture and rural life, as above referred to), and provides inspiration, guidance, and various general safeguards for the welfare of the rural churches. Each of the two churches is also a member of a district, presided over by a district superintendent assigned by the conference. High Prairie is in the Independence District, Zion in the Topeka District. Subject to the general policies determined by the conference, to the general supervision of the district superintendent, and to the assignment of ministers, each church is pretty much on its own. Its destiny is largely in the hands of its members.

Partridge Community Church has a loose but helpful affiliation with the Congregational-Christian Church, "for purposes," a Partridge Community announcement says, "of comity, counsel, and fellowship." The present minister adds: "There must be a channel for missionary and humanitarian outreaches. The local church must also have a larger fellowship for its life; otherwise it could easily become self-centered and isolated." But Partridge Community is completely autonomous. It is governed wholly by its own members, who select the minister, determine his pay and tenure, provide all financial support, and make their own rules; and who, if they wish, can terminate their affiliation with the larger church body.

A brief discussion of the officers, committee members, and other sharers of responsibility at Zion Church for the year 1947-48 will illustrate the local governmental and organizational structure of the two Methodist churches. The official roster includes the pastor, a board of 12 stewards, a board of 9 trustees who serve three-year terms and are ineligible to succeed themselves, an 11-member board of education, 24 church-school teachers and officers, an 11-member youth council, and nine committees (on finance, pastoral relations and policy, nominations, audit and records, music, ushering, altar, telephone, fellowship) with a total membership of 43, the committee memberships ranging in number from one to seven.

The official roster contains about 100 names, out of a total church membership of about 300. In addition, there are the officers and members of the various church-sponsored organizations, such as the Woman's Society of Christian

Service, to which reference is made elsewhere in this report. These figures suggest something of the extent to which responsibilities and tasks are distributed among the members. This wide distribution is an important factor in making the church effective, not only in stimulating the interest of the members but also in utilizing that interest for the benefit of the community.

At Partridge Community Church, the structure of organization is somewhat simpler but not greatly different. Some detailed questions are submitted directly to the membership for decision. For example, the question whether to permit the case study herein reported upon was voted upon by the church body, to which a favorable recommendation had been made by the church board.

The organization structure of Partridge Community Church is composed of the following: nine trustees, three elected each year for three-year terms; nine deacons, three elected each year for three-year terms (each of these groups elects its own officers); and one treasurer, one financial secretary, and one church clerk, each elected annually by the church body. Each of these three also may serve simultaneously as a trustee or a deacon. All the above constitute the church board, sometimes called the executive board. This board elects its own president, secretary, and committees. Subject always to the will of the membership, it is the governing body.

Through the above officers, the members and officers of various church committees and of the church-sponsored organizations, a wide distribution of responsibilities and tasks is obtained.

Each of the three churches clearly is committed to the principle of extensive membership-participation in the government and the work of the institution. Such participation doubtless enhances membership interest, enthusiasm, and benefits.

CHURCH PILLARS

Notwithstanding the definite policy of all three churches to enrich their official rosters frequently by adding new and youthful workers, certain church members render such outstanding service that they are retained as officers year after year and so become veritable "pillars".

Not infrequently, the tendency to become a pillar appears to be hereditary, the same family name appearing on the official roster constantly, or almost so, for two or three successive generations. At High Prairie, instances are provided by the Wings, the Colaws, the Marples, the Campbells, the Yorks, and others.

There are "pillars" also at Zion, where the minister, while enlisting the services of a large number of church

members, has been obliged to place major reliance in a comparatively small number of men and women who are always willing and eager to help, a few even willing to lead.

At Partridge Community, there are several examples of pillars. One is Mr. McCoy, who in 1948 was serving his 32nd year as treasurer, 24 years with Community Church preceded by eight years with the Congregational Church. Several have served as church officials for periods longer than 10 years.

The experience of the three churches in the matter of pillars is quite comparable to that of secular organizations, most of which learn soon or late, as Isaiah learned, that it is necessary to place major reliance in a "remnant."

FISCAL EXPERIENCE

The three rural churches have not been immune from the pecuniary ills common from time to time among churches everywhere. In fact, so frequent and so severe were the pecuniary difficulties in the early periods of the churches' development that the mere survival of the three is a notable achievement. A few examples will suffice to indicate something of what the churches have gone through, financially.

At High Prairie, the cornerstone of a new church building was laid May 18, 1883: but, because of what the record calls "trials and tribulations, financial and otherwise," the dedication of the completed, debt-free building was delayed for more than 20 years, or until August 1, 1903. In an attempt to liquidate the debt resulting from the construction of the new building a group of 59 church members and supporters in July, 1883, signed an agreement to pay off the balance of the debt by May 1, 1884. The agreement was not wholly effective, so that eight years later, in January, 1892, another agreement was entered into for the purpose of liquidating the remainder of the debt, apparently \$365. The 69 signers of the second agreement were obligated for an average of \$5.25 each, to be paid in two installments. Times were really hard in 1892! By August 1, 1903, more than nine years after the signing of the second agreement, the debt was paid and the treasury contained a cash balance of \$32. The record indicates that the cost of the original building, its furniture, and the building site (possibly excluding the value of some of the labor) was \$1,016.95.

At Partridge in 1876, when the church preceding Partridge Community was three years old, a minister was employed at a salary of "at least \$600 a year, with the understanding that what could not be raised locally by subscription (would) be obtained from the Home Missionary Society." Five years later, in 1881, a minister was employed on half-time at an annual salary of \$250, of which \$100 was to be obtained from the missionary society. In October,

1888, the records show, a special collection of \$23 was taken up to apply on the minister's back salary. On January 11, 1890, it was recorded that "the assessment of six cents per member was partly paid" and that the minister's salary was still in arrears. As late as April 1, 1933, the record shows that at Partridge Community there were severe financial difficulties, that the pledges were extensively in arrears, and that "the pastor and the janitor were taking all the cuts." These melancholy items contrast with the record regarding the raising of funds to construct the new (Partridge Community) Church. In December, 1925, it was reported that "a campaign for finances was made and the goal of \$25,000 was reached."

The records available at Zion are less clear than those at the other two, on the subject of early-day finances. They do show that a dozen years elapsed between the organization of the church and the construction in 1892, at a cost of \$1,800, of the first wing of the church building. Even as late as 1928, there was serious difficulty in balancing the church budget and in 1929 an assessment of 10 percent (based presumably on each member's contribution) was voted for the purpose of making up a budget deficit. These are only examples.

In recent years, financial affairs have been much more satisfactorily dealt with. In Table 2 are shown, in round numbers, the annual budgets of each of two of the churches for the past decade, and for the third church for the years since 1941, when its accounts have been reported separately.

The marked temporary increases at High Prairie represent extra expenditures for relocating and remodeling the church in 1944 and 1945. The figures for Zion include all contributions by church members to the church and to the conference for various causes, such as increased support for church colleges.

An attempt was made to compare *per capita* contributions by the members of the three rural churches with one another and with average *per capita* contributions of Protestant church members generally: but the data available do not seem adequate to provide comparisons that would be valid rather than invidious. The *per capita* figures given at the foot of Table 2 serve chiefly to cast doubt upon the validity of data on church members' *per capita* contributions, unless the data cover very long periods. In short periods, special conditions (such as the inclusion of an expensive church remodeling project at High Prairie in 1944 and 1946 and the exclusion of the \$25,000 church building project at Partridge Community where the cost was paid before the period shown began) distort the figures so as to make them misleading.

As a matter of interest the following *per capita* figures, generously provided by the Federal Council of Churches and

by the district superintendents of the Topeka and Independence districts, are given. In 1946, *per capita* contributions of 19 Protestant denominations in the United States averaged \$19.08, the Methodist figure for the same year being \$18.33. In 1947, the figure for all the Methodist churches, rural and urban, in the Independence District (which includes High Prairie) was \$13.71, that for the Topeka District (which includes Zion) was \$19.89, and that for the entire Kansas Conference was \$16.28.

The following comments regarding the fiscal experience of the three churches are prompted by the findings of the study: (1) At the time the study was made, all three churches were free of debt; (2) the general trend in size of

Table 2. Approximate Annual Budgets of the Three Churches for the Years Shown.

Year	High Prairie	Partridge Community	Zion
1938	—	\$2,200	\$1,700
1939	—	2,100	2,700
1940	—	1,900	2,800
1941	\$ 500	2,200	2,500
1942	500	2,200	2,700
1943	500	2,500	3,600
1944	2,600	3,000	5,800
1945	5,800	3,700	7,000
1946	1,300	4,100	5,600
1947	2,100	4,400	8,400
Average per annum	\$1,900	\$2,800	\$4,300
Approximate average membership	90	300	275
Approximate average annually per member	\$ 21	\$ 9	\$ 16

annual budgets is upward; (3) when the High Prairie church building improvement was completed, at a cost exceeding \$5,000, the improvement was paid for; (4) at Partridge Community a grant--not a loan--of \$2,000 from the Congregational Building Society was accepted as an aid in financing the new church building, but the grant has since been returned, although there was no obligation to return it; and (5) at each of the churches the minister's salary is usually the major item in the annual budget. On a full-time basis, it is of the order of \$2,400 a year in addition to living quarters for the minister and his family, and the salary trend is upward.

The preceding discussion, though neither detailed nor complete, should give a fairly reliable indication of financial requirements in the conduct of churches of the kind described.

THE MINISTERS AND THEIR TENURE

In the conduct of the study here reported no contact was made with any of the ministers who have served the three

churches except those who were serving when the study was in progress. These three and their respective churches are:

The Rev. G. L. Taylor at High Prairie.

The Rev. Frank G. Richard at Partridge Community.

The Rev. Gene Taylor at Zion.

It is a pleasure to offer a tribute to these men for their ability, devotion, efficiency, geniality, and Christian character. Their enthusiasm and high esteem for rural people, their understanding of rural conditions, and their consecration are admirable and inspiring. They deserve and enjoy the highest esteem of their congregations and of the general population of their communities. No doubt the fine qualities of these three men are a major factor for effectiveness in the three churches.

The derivations of the words minister and pastor, now generally used as having the same meaning, indicate the basic functions of a church minister or pastor. The word minister is from a Latin word meaning to serve. Pastor is a Latin word meaning shepherd. Hence, the minister, or pastor, is both a leader and a servant of his people. To have a minister who performs well in these two functions is a great advantage to a rural church. From time to time during their existence, and particularly during the tenure of the three men named above, the three churches have been fortunate in their ministers.

But they have not always been fortunate. All three have had some ineffective ministers and all three have had to contend with short average ministerial tenure. Some data on tenure are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Ministerial Tenure at the Three Churches.

Church	Age, Years	Number of Ministers	Tenure, years		
			Shortest	Longest	Average
High Prairie	70	35	1	7.0	2.0
Partridge					
Entire history	75	23	0.25	14.0	3.3
Before merger	51	19	0.25	7.0	2.7
Since merger	24	4	1.25	14.0	6.0
Zion	67	23	1.00	7.0	3.0

It will be noted in Table 3 that, except for Partridge Community since it became a community church, the average tenure is less than 4 years; that the longest tenure is 14 years; and that a tenure of one year or less has not been uncommon. The records show that in several instances ministers resigned, sometimes by request, before the expiration of their terms. This indicates that there has been dissatisfaction from time to time, sometimes on the part of the minister and sometimes on the part of the congregation. The longest tenure among the 81 ministers involved in the figures in Table 3 is 14 years. This is the tenure of Dr. Frank

G. Richard at Partridge Community, a tenure still in effect in the autumn of 1948.

There are two schools of thought on the subject of ministerial tenure. One appears to favor short tenure. In fact, the Methodist Church follows a general policy of transferring ministers about every four or five years. The other school holds that only with long tenure can a minister reach his maximum usefulness.

Although the present study provides some evidence on both sides of the question, it provides no conclusive evidence. For example, at High Prairie, where there never has been a full-time minister, where the average ministerial tenure is only two years, and where the longest tenure (that of the 1948 incumbent) in the 70-year history is only seven years, there is impressive evidence of high enthusiasm, devotion, and effectiveness in the church body. The group at High Prairie has survived a long and difficult period of struggle and it seems stronger now than ever before. On the other hand, at Partridge Community there appears to have been a marked acceleration of progress during the long (14 years and still continuing) tenure of the present minister.

Short tenure provides a maximum of stimulus that accompanies change, with all that such stimulus implies, good or bad. Long tenure provides opportunity for cumulative effects to make themselves felt, for good or for ill. Certainly the subject of tenure is one that each rural church organization should consider carefully and often.

One of the respects in which the three institutions here considered exemplify three different methods of operating effective rural churches is the nature of the tenure of the three present ministers. At Zion the minister is on full time, as has been true for several years. At Partridge Community, although the minister is on full time, the church shares his services to a considerable extent with the Kansas Industrial Reformatory, at nearby Hutchinson, which he serves as chaplain. At High Prairie where there never has been a full-time minister, the present minister is on half-time and serves another rural church on the same basis. He lives in a parsonage in the village of Buffalo, six miles from High Prairie.

At the High Prairie annual meeting in August, 1948, the members took action looking toward the building of a parsonage. This may mean that they are looking forward to giving their minister full-time status. In any case, it is clear that all three methods represented by the three churches are giving an unusual degree of satisfaction, although still better arrangements doubtless are possible.

MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS

No doubt the qualifications of the minister, and of his wife, are a major factor in the performance of a rural church.

In the opinion of a deeply interested layman, desirable qualifications are, first, personal: sound character, engaging personality, understanding of rural conditions and rural people, a definite preference for living in the countryside, a strong liking for rural people, a high estimate of the importance--to the nation and to civilization--of the countryside and its inhabitants; and an active sense of humor to provide perspective, tolerance, and patience. A high opinion of rural people is especially significant. A minister who has a "slumming" attitude is more likely to repel than to attract rural people, at least in the Middle West. The second set of qualifications are professional: good general education, adequate technical education and competence, and at least a modicum of experience of rural church work, preferably both as a lay participant and as a professional church worker.

The three ministers included in this study have these qualifications, but of course in varying degrees. Each of the three has demonstrated possession of the personal qualities named, some excelling in one quality and others in another. All three are quite at home in the countryside and devoted to rural people. All three are college graduates. Two have completed seminary courses and obtained bachelor of divinity (or of sacred theology) degrees. One has also a doctor of divinity degree. The experience of the three in professional church work ranges in length from eight years to more than thirty years.

IN-SERVICE MINISTERIAL TRAINING

In a constantly changing world, with its inevitable influences upon rural communities, the training of a rural minister can never be really complete. The minister must choose between stagnation, and its resulting futility, and constant and repeated refreshment of his interest, knowledge, and skill. The worthy minister sedulously avoids stagnation. The ministers of all three churches regularly pursue activities by which their usefulness to their churches is increased. These activities include extensive reading, wide association, and frequent attendance at the annual Town and Country Church Conference at Kansas State College, and at a variety of meetings of various church and civic groups both inside and outside Kansas.

As recently as the summer of 1948, the minister at Zion pursued a four weeks' short course at a prominent school of theology at Denver. From time to time the minister at Partridge Community attends regional and national meetings of community church representatives and conventions of the Congregational-Christian Church. In 1947 he attended a National Rural Life Seminar at Washington, D. C. Usually a part of his travel expense is paid from the church treasury,

as authorized by the church.

It is gratifying to note that the ministers of the three churches are encouraged in various ways, financially and otherwise, to keep abreast of developments that affect their work and their communities. One of the most profitable investments that a rural church can make is to spend money to encourage and aid a competent minister to preserve and improve his competence. To do this requires frequent in-service training in various forms.

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES OF MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

In addition to possessing adequate personal qualifications for leadership, the effective rural minister is likely to use one or more special techniques that enhance his effectiveness. Such techniques are in use at all three rural churches. One is to bring in special speakers from time to time to discuss subjects on which the speakers are authorities. For example, speakers from the School of Agriculture of the State College may discuss agricultural conditions or other rural subjects; or a representative of the medical school of the State University may discuss rural health and medical care. Outside speakers may be used at the regular church services, at special meetings, or at church dinners.

A rather striking example of an outside speaker is a member of the British Parliament who spoke at Partridge Community Church on behalf of the Friends' Service Committee and whose services were obtained through the Kansas Institute of International Relations at Friends University at Wichita. Talks by such speakers inform church members regarding international relations and quicken interest in human brotherhood. It is the practice at Partridge Community to take up an offering and present it to the outside speaker. At the time of the visit of the British M. P., the offering amounted to \$107.

Another effective technique is to invite outside groups to attend church services or other church meetings on special occasions. An example is the presence of two 4-H Clubs and their adult leaders as guests at Zion Church on Rural Life Sunday in 1948. These two clubs--the "Robinson Meadowlarks" and the "Mount Zion Rustlers," sponsored by another rural church--not only were present as guests but also were represented on the program, as were the "Zion Zippers" 4-H Cub. The bringing in of outside groups is stimulating to both hosts and guests and is an important good-will factor.

A third example of special techniques is the annual presentation by the minister at Partridge Community of a list of specific recommendations. These are presented and discussed at the annual meeting of the church members in January. The recommendations set up goals toward which the church is to strive during the year. They are subject to approval by vote of the members.

A final example, delightfully obvious in all three communities, is the day-to-day expression of good will, tolerance, and other Christian virtues by the ministers. The expression of these qualities in everyday affairs is one of the most effective techniques used by the three ministers. And, of course, it is wholly unaffected; otherwise, it would soon cease to be constructively effective.

THE MATTER OF CREED

In any one of most midwestern rural communities there are adherents to a variety of church creeds. If the community contains, say, 100 farm families, as many as 10 or even 20 church denominations may be represented. The number of representatives of each denomination may vary from 10 or fewer to 60 or more families. In any case the number of representatives of any one of several denominations is almost certain to be too small to warrant attempts to provide separate church facilities.

In such a situation, each rural family faces three alternatives: (1) Affiliation with some church outside the community at whatever extra expense and inconvenience that such affiliation entails; (2) dispensing with all active church affiliation; and (3) affiliation with a church within the community whose creed is such as to be acceptable, or at least not repellent, to the family concerned.

It is seldom feasible, financially and otherwise, for such a community to maintain more than one church. To enlist the support and participation of the requisite number of families, a single church, whatever its denomination and sectarian affiliation, must have a creed that is limited essentially to fundamentals regarding which a sufficient number of the families of the community agree. This is precisely what has taken place with the three churches herein discussed. All three for many years, one of them from the very beginning, have accepted members from a variety of church denominations without requiring renunciation of details of creed of those denominations.

This fact is exemplified by the procedures of the two Methodist churches, as represented by Zion. For admittance to Zion, an applicant for membership is required to--

“accept and confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and pledge your allegiance to His kingdom, and receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the New Testament.”

The requirement at Partridge Community is equally simple:

“We accept the religion of love and service, as taught and lived by Jesus, to be the basis of our faith and action, and declare it our purpose both to seek

and to do the will of God, and to make the spirit of Christ dominant in our lives, and in the relations of men with one another.”

A statement published by Partridge Community Church applies in its essentials to all three churches:

“Community Church is founded upon the conviction that a Christian fellowship is something that reaches out beyond any one religious group. It believes that the true Christian purposes as set forth by Jesus can be much better realized in many communities by reducing the number of such groups and uniting on a basis of Christian fellowship; that by pooling talents, leadership, and funds, it is possible to provide more adequate equipment and a more permanent leadership, and make a more united impact upon the community life.”

What seems to be the attitude of the members of the three churches with reference to creed can be described briefly with the statement that the members are united in the acceptance of fundamentals, and tolerant of differences regarding details. The clearly apparent quest of these rural people for meaningful and satisfying simplicity in their religious affairs reminds one of a verse written many years ago by Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

“So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While the only thing this old world needs
Is the simple art of being kind.”

INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

No rural church or other rural institution can operate effectively in a vacuum. To be constructively effective, a rural church must have amicable and mutually helpful relationships with other rural institutions, and often also with certain urban organizations and agencies. The three churches herein described have these helpful relationships, to some of which reference is made elsewhere in this report. A few examples, not all directly concerned with strictly agricultural affairs, will illustrate this fact.

As already indicated, all three churches in their early stages made extensive use of local school buildings. In some instances the obligations so incurred by the churches have in some measure been repaid in recent years through the giving of Bible instruction to public school children by the ministers. There are various other examples of cooperation between the churches and the public schools, cooperation which impairs the autonomy of neither but is helpful to both.

An unusual instance is provided at Partridge Community

Church, whose minister has served as president of the Reno County Cooperative Council. This organization is composed of representatives of a variety of agricultural cooperatives --marketing, consumers, and financial--operating in the county. By serving as an officer of the council, which represents certain interests of many members of Partridge Community Church, the minister has been helpful not only in a direct way but also as an example of the sharing of the responsibilities of citizenship.

Recently Zion Church cooperated with other Brown County churches in the conduct of the Christian Rural Overseas Program project for European relief, and with churches and other organizations in a campaign for improved hospital facilities for the county. Zion also cooperates regularly with other churches and with civic organizations in the annual Christmas Sing at the county seat town.

All three churches make extensive use of the services of newspapers in announcing and reporting church events.

These are a few of many examples, some mentioned elsewhere in this report, of the fact that all three churches cooperate extensively with other institutions, both religious and secular, for the improvement of the life of their respective communities.

SOME HUMAN CONTRIBUTIONS

As is widely known, the American countryside produces a surplus of population which, by migrating to the towns and cities, not only helps to maintain the urban population but also provides valuable services to both town and country and so contributes to national well-being. Whenever, as often is true, such migrating surplus population has benefited spiritually and morally from the services of the rural church, it carries the benefits to urban centers so that its contribution to national well-being is more than numerical and technical ; it is also spiritual and moral.

Instances of migration to the towns and cities of useful young men and young women abound in the three church communities. Mention of a few of these instances will suffice to indicate the variety of services performed by these young migrants and their wide geographic distribution. As an almost random sample, there are a government clerk in Washington, D. C., an employee of a large consumers' cooperative at Kansas City, a postal official in Los Angeles, a Chamber of Commerce secretary in a thriving Western Kansas town, an employee of an aluminum company in Pennsylvania, a railroad station master in Texas, several employees of a large petroleum refining company in Oklahoma, a college music teacher in South Carolina, a bank official in Kansas City, a physician in Oklahoma and another in New Jersey, and a chaplain at the Federal Prison at Alcatraz. These

and many other migrants have been participants in the activities of one or another of the three rural churches.

This sample is presented as an example of the fact that the contributions of the rural church to national well-being include numerous important human elements.

ATTITUDES OF CHURCH MEMBERS

It is often difficult to ascertain clearly the attitudes of members toward their churches and to discover the motives which underlie membership. Yet some understanding of the attitudes and the motives is essential to an understanding of the effectiveness of the churches. Many loyal church members appear to have given little conscious thought to the question of why they are loyal. Yet when pressed, most of the 100 or more members interviewed in this study were able to give specific reasons why they support the churches to which they belong.

In addition to attending several church services--one of which included testimonials--the interviewer visited numerous church members in their homes. Persons interviewed, individually or in couples, ranged in age from young people in their teens and recently married couples to one man 93 years old, whom the interviewer found digging a trench and obviously pleased with the universe. The testimony of church members, both men and women, varied in kind and in the degree of enthusiasm with which it was presented. Of course, as those interviewed were active church members, the testimony was preponderantly favorable to the church concerned in each instance. The following are some briefly stated portions of the testimony obtained regarding the question, why do you support the church?

It is good for the children.--Reference already has been made to the influence of children in the development of the three churches: solicitude for the welfare of children underlay the origin of High Prairie, the merger resulting in Partridge Community, and the change from the German language to English at Zion. A corresponding solicitude was expressed repeatedly in the interviews. The extent to which parents connected the service given by the church with the spiritual and moral well-being of their children is both significant and praiseworthy.

It promotes wholesome social relationships and developments.--This reason overlaps the preceding one somewhat. It is likely to appeal to any parent, rural or urban, who is concerned about the kinds of social influences to which boys and girls may be exposed. In the expressed opinion of many of those interviewed, the three churches provide some satisfactory social opportunities for young persons. Moreover--and this also is important--several of those interviewed spoke gratefully of the fact that church-sponsored activities

have led in many instances to happy and lasting marriages and to other desirable forms of lasting friendship.

It provides an orderly method for individual and group expression of religious impulses.--These expressions take various forms: worship, prayer, hymn-singing, active benevolence, religious stimulus and instruction, etc. This is the reason about which those interviewed were most inclined to be reticent, as is quite understandable. Yet it probably is the most important of all the reasons given. It involves the basic function of the rural church. The reticence of those interviewed is a commendable bit of evidence of the importance of the function and of its deep significance to participants in this basic activity of the church.

It develops and helps to bring into expression a sense of community in the area served.--This reason was given frequently in answer to the question of having one church rather than two or more in the community. It was given specially impressive emphasis in the Partridge area, where the present church was formed by what was virtually a merger of its two predecessors. Several of those interviewed in that area have lived there both when there were two churches and when there was only one. From their testimony--whether they had belonged to the one church or the other--it appears that the presence of two churches in the sparsely populated area had exercised a divisive influence upon the community. The enthusiasm with which the present community spirit and the present extent of community cooperation were referred to was impressive. While the emphasis on this reason was more pronounced in the Partridge area, the reason was given in several interviews in the two other areas. Moreover, the evidence as well as the testimony lends importance to the reason. Some of the evidence--such as community interest in soil conservation and in 4-H Club work--is stated elsewhere in this report. One of the most important results of the development of a sense of community is that it helps to bring about one of the major objectives of every constructively effective rural church--the improvement of human relations in the community.

Other reasons besides the four stated above were given, but these four represent fairly the consensus of the church members interviewed. Considered together, they make it easy to understand why the three church groups have survived their many vicissitudes and why they are as effective as they are.

NEED FOR AN ADEQUATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM

At the time of the study, two of the three ministers concerned were at or near the normal age of retirement for professional men. When the welfare of these men and of their churches requires retirement, at least two important problems

will face the churches. One is the problem of providing a just and adequate financial status for those who retire. The other is the problem of obtaining satisfactory successors. Both these problems are related to the subject of a retirement system.

Typically, an effective rural minister is so poorly paid, so self-forgetful, and so generous that after an active life of devotion to his people he is almost or quite unprepared financially to retire when he should or to have anything like adequate financial resources when he does retire. Frequently he owns no home in which to live and has no way of purchasing one. There are at least two bad results: (1) the minister is kept in active service longer than is desirable for him or for his church; (2) when he retires he is in some degree dependent on charity, a status that is poor compensation for a long life of useful service.

To an increasing extent, retirement arrangements are a factor in obtaining the services of high class men in professional work. Other things being equal, an effective rural minister is likely to choose a church that has an adequate retirement system in preference to one that has none or that has an inadequate one.

In at least one layman's opinion, every rural church should be a participant in an adequate, actuarially sound, retirement system for ministers. Regular financial contributions to a retirement fund should be made by the church and by the minister. The minister's retirement contract should go with him, to whatever church he serves. Such contracts are widely available, in both church-approved and regular commercial insurance companies. The total annual contribution to the retirement fund should be equal to not less than 10 percent, preferably 20 percent, of the minister's salary.

In one layman's opinion, the use of an adequate retirement system for rural ministers could be made an important factor in the strengthening of the rural church.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the case studies of the three churches may be stated briefly as follows:

1. Situated in three Kansas type-of-farming areas and using three somewhat different methods of operation, the three churches are serving their respective rural communities with impressive effectiveness.

2. The service rendered by the three churches combines major emphasis on religion with whole-hearted support of the dominant secular interests of the communities.

3. Land tenure in the three communities being well stabilized, the percentage of farm tenancy appears not to be a factor in determining the effectiveness of the churches.

4. In two of the communities there is and has been no predominance by people of any one national origin. In the third, people of Germanic origin have predominated. The difference seems not to be or to have been significant in relation to the effectiveness of the churches.

5. Ranging in age from 67 to 75 years, all three churches are indigenous to their environments and reflect the religious aspirations of the people of the respective communities.

6. The welfare of young people has been a major consideration in the development of the three churches, and so has the desire of adults for organized religious facilities.

7. In sparsely settled rural communities in which a few families represent a variety of sectarian groups, an effective rural church must operate by a simple and liberal creed. There are important advantages in affiliation of the rural church with some large denominational body. The three churches herein discussed have creeds and affiliations of the kind indicated.

8. The services rendered by the three churches to their respective communities fall into three major categories: religious, social, agricultural.

9. Membership in the three churches is fairly well stabilized, and it contains a satisfactory age distribution.

10. The organization and government of the three churches provide for a high degree of autonomy and a wide distribution of responsibility.

11. Each church has had a checkered fiscal experience but is now free of debt and in a strong financial position. The average annual budget during the past decade has been about \$2,000 where the minister is employed on half-time and about \$3,000 to \$4,000 where a full-time minister is provided. Salaries for full-time ministers are of the order of \$2,400 a year plus the use of a parsonage, and the salary trend is upward.

12. The character, personality, and competence of the minister are highly important factors in determining the effectiveness of a rural church.

13. The tenure of ministers at the three churches has ranged from less than one year to more than 14 years. The subject of ministerial tenure deserves the careful and frequent consideration of rural church bodies.

14. Adequate in-service training and liberal and dependable retirement systems for rural ministers are believed to be essential to the best future development of rural churches.

15. Special techniques of ministerial leadership, and close and friendly relationships with other rural institutions appear to be necessary to the effectiveness of rural churches.

16. The consensus of church members interviewed is

that their churches are valuable chiefly in four areas: the well-being of children, the development of wholesome social relationships, the providing of an orderly method for the expression of religious impulses, and the development and maintenance of an active sense of community in the areas served.

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