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BOARD OF DOMESTIC MISSIONS.

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CHURCH-DEBTS.

As many of our missionary churches have been greatly embarrassed by debts incurred in the erection of church edifices, we feel it to be a duty to call the attention of our brethren to this subject. It is very desirable and important for congregations to erect suitable houses of worship, as soon as they are able to do so; for without church edifices, they must continue to labour under great disadvantages. For want of them, many churches remain for a long time weak and feeble, and are obliged to be almost wholly dependent upon the Board of Domestic Missions for their support; and hence this Board has always encouraged its missionaries to endeavour, as soon as they prudently can, to procure the erection of suitable church edifices.

But while it is desirable and important to erect houses of worship, when the means can be raised for their erection, it is very undesirable and injurious to contract debts which the people are unable to pay.

Such incumbrances are often oppressively burdensome, and occasion a great deal of uneasiness and inconvenience. They sometimes prevent the growth of congregations by deterring others from uniting with them, and not unfrequently lead to the removal of pastors, on the ground that more popular and attractive preachers are needed to enable the people to liquidate their debts. And while thus incumbered, they are of course not able to support the gospel among them, and are compelled to continue their dependence upon the Board. It is no uncommon thing to assign church-debts as the reason why the same appropriation is required from the Board from year to year, and for many years in succession, and why, in the meantime, they take up no collections for any of the benevolent schemes of the Church!

The erection of church edifices, under such circumstances, instead of relieving the Board, only adds to their expenditures. Thousands of dollars are expended by the Board of Domestic Missions in the support of pastors whose congregations would be able to sustain them without aid from the Board, were it not for their church-debts; and thus, *indirectly*, the Board of Domestic Missions is liquidating debts contracted in the erection of church edifices, or helping to pay the interest accruing upon debts incurred in the building of houses of worship.

There is reason to fear that in some instances there is great want of discretion in the building of houses of worship—they are sometimes unnecessarily large and costly. It is certainly desirable to build churches sufficiently large to accommodate the existing congregation, and to make a reasonable allowance for a prospective increase of members; and it is conceded that neatness, as well as comfort, ought to be consulted in the style and manner of their construction. Neither are we disposed to condemn a more costly style of architecture, when congregations are able to

PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-SUSTENTATION.

Elmwood, Peoria co., Ill., July 2, 1857.

Rev. Dr. Musgrave:

Dear Sir—Another quarter's labour has closed the first of this month. This has ended one year's commission from your Board, in this place. Since the organization of this church, one year ago the eighth of last month, I have preached in this place, and three other points, (school-houses in the immediate vicinity,) one-half of my time, with some encouragement.

Having no room in which to hold meetings, we were compelled to secure a house of our own. This, under God, has been done. On the first of February last, our house of worship—thirty by forty feet, with gallery and spire—was dedicated to the service of Almighty God. Since then the attendance on public worship has been regular and on the increase. Several good, substantial families have lately moved into our midst, which has encouraged our hearts, and strengthened the things that were ready to die. With God's blessing, we hope soon to relieve your Board from assisting. An application will be made for the renewal of my commission for another year on this field.

Owing to the 4th of July coming on next Saturday, our quarterly communion is put off until two weeks following, when, according to the order of the present Session, the congregation will meet to elect an additional member to the Session. This is the more desirable, so that previous to the above-named application being made, a full effort to comply with your regulations will be made before making the application.

A Sabbath-school has been organized this summer, with encouraging prospects for good being accomplished. The school meets every Sabbath. A library has been secured of the books of our Board; also fifteen copies of the *Sabbath-School Visitor*.

A weekly prayer-meeting has been commenced, and is well attended. This is our greatest encouragement. Our only confidence is in the precious promises of the great Head of the Church: "Lo I am with you alway." All we attempt is in his name, relying on his blessing for success. Were it not that the cause is his own, we would feel sometimes like giving up, and seeking another field. When these depressing thoughts are the heaviest, some encouraging drops fall out, to give confidence in His word. We do feel that God's favour has attended our feeble efforts in this place, to gather a church after our order, and to build up the walls of our beloved Zion. Our church already takes rank among the other two in this place, although they number as many years as we do months, since their first materials were gathered into churches in this immediate neighbourhood.

My other church, where I am pastor one-half my time, is in a prosperous condition. The contract for a church building, to be erected immediately, has been closed this week. At our last communion, on Sabbath, we received seven additional members.

With many thanks to your Board, I am yours, fraternally,
D. F. McFARLAND.

REPORT FROM KENTUCKY.

Greenville, Ky., July 1, 1857.

Rev. Dr. Musgrave:

Dear Brother—The time having arrived when I should make my first quarterly report to the Board, since my recommission on the first of April last, I would avail myself of this opportunity in the discharge of that duty.

My time is divided between Mount Zion, South

Carrollton, and Greenville churches, preaching one Sabbath a month at each of the former places, and two Sabbaths a month at the latter; and which appointments I have hitherto attempted to fill, as best I could.

A Sabbath-school in connection with each church is carried on, with more or less efficiency and interest. In the Mount Zion Church, and where they had previously thought anything in that way could not be effected, because of its being a *country* church, in connection with some other circumstances, the elders however have within the present year made an effort, and are now conducting a school of some promise.

Prayer-meetings also are more or less attended to in each church. Congregations on Sabbath preaching are generally pretty good, in some cases large, even on ordinary occasions. Attention is generally respectful, and sometimes apparently solemn; and yet, because of the absence of the special influences of the Holy Spirit, "the ways of Zion do mourn," in regard to the growing in grace of saints, and the conversion of sinners. Still, we would patiently wait, "and hope to the end."

Yours, in the bonds of the gospel,

ALBAN S. HOWSLEY.

STILLWATER, MINNESOTA.

July 10th, 1857.

To the Secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions.

Rev. and dear Brother—To-day closes my quarter of labour in the service of the Board in this Territory. At the suggestion of the Presbyterian Committee, I first visited the recently organized church of Vermilion, near Lakeville, in Dakota county. That little church manifested an earnest desire to secure a portion of my services, but the Presbyterian Committee on receiving my statement of facts, appeared to think it best that I should occupy a region of country lying northward of St. Paul, and accessible from Stillwater. One point where I am labouring is Murrayville on White Bear Lake, nine miles from this place. Several families of our church reside there, and it is an attractive summer resort for persons in quest of health. No sermon has ever been preached in that neighbourhood by any minister of the gospel except myself. It is pleasant thus to preach the gospel in places where otherwise it would not be heard. The place, however, is a scene of much Sabbath desecration. The white sails, out on the broad and beautiful lake, at almost every hour of the sacred day of worship, proclaim that some are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. It is to be hoped that those who are accustomed to spend the Sabbath in this manner, will ere long, through the stated preaching of the gospel, learn to occupy it in a manner far more satisfactory and profitable. It is possible that Murrayville may be a station on the Stillwater and St. Paul Railroad, which will give it considerable additional importance. Another place where I have preached some, is Afton, on Lake St. Croix, twelve miles below Stillwater. There I found a Presbyterian married lady, who esteems it a great privilege to hear preaching from a minister of her own denomination, and the people of the village are generally attentive and interested. I have also visited Cottage Grove, a most beautiful farming settlement, ten miles from Afton, and about twenty from Stillwater, and preached there to a large, attentive, and intelligent congregation. We have there one family of our church. The gentleman is anxious to secure Presbyterian preaching for a part of the time, but when I saw him, it was uncer-