

Historical Presentation

Part Two—Mission Work, the Early Years

Aaron Ladner Lindsley was the first installed pastor of First Presbyterian. His predecessor, Phillip Caffrey, was never installed as pastor but served as an evangelist among the congregation. For all practical purposes, however, he was the pastor of the church. Lindsley was a native New Yorker and was fifty years old when he accepted the call to ministry in Portland's First Presbyterian. Before seminary he worked for a while as editor of the *Troy Whig* (Troy, New York). One of the formative moments in his life occurred when he worked for a short while with newspaper publisher, Presbyterian minister, and ardent abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy. Lindsley was among the defenders of Lovejoy's press the night before November 7, 1837 when the abolitionist was killed and his press destroyed by rowdy, pro-slavery mob. On the evening of the sixth, Lovejoy and a friend went undercover among the angry mob in an effort to discover its intentions. They were recognized as Lovejoy supporters but were able to escape unharmed. Shortly afterwards he wrote his mother: "There beside the grave of Lovejoy, the martyred patriot, I poured out my soul in prayer to God that he would enable me to become just such a fearless advocate of eternal truth, such an unflinching opponent of oppression, such an unwavering friend of the oppressed and down-trodden, such an unbending spirit in adversity and peril, in such constant preparation for death, and—if need be—such a martyr in so blessed a cause." Lindsley would not die the martyr's death, but in every other respect his prayer was fulfilled.

WORK WITH THE NEZ PERCE

Lindsley saw First Church Portland as a headquarters for Christian mission work throughout the Pacific Northwest, and he promoted that work broadly. He was an avid supporter of the work of Kate and Sue McBeth. The McBeth sisters were missionaries among the Nez Perce Indians in Idaho. During the Chief Joseph War in 1877 Sue, the first to come to Idaho lived with the Lindsleys for a while. During the same period of time a number of the Nez Perce had been brought to Fort Vancouver. In September 1877 Dr. Lindsley and Miss McBeth made pastoral calls among the Indians at the Fort. Religious meetings were either organized or were already being conducted under the leadership of some of the members of the Reservation churches. Dr. Lindsley preached to the inmates of the fort through an interpreter, James Reuben. Later some of these Indian converts professed their faith and were admitted to the membership of

First Presbyterian. Our rolls contain both their Indian names and their new baptized Christian names. Each was given a church card with his or her "old name" and "new name" recorded on it.

WORK IN ALASKA

Lindsley also had an interest in opening mission work in the newly acquired Alaska Territory. He sought and gained an interview with Secretary Seward and his party in Victoria, BC, on their return from a fact-finding mission in 1869. Some years later a member of First Church, J.C. Mallory was dispatched to view things first hand. Though Mallory was only able to stay for about a month, he was impressed by the circumstances of the people as well as their earnestness in desiring a better life. While there he met and employed an Indian who had been converted to Christianity to teach a school. Philip McKay, whose Indian name was Clah, had come to Fort Wrangel in 1876 with a small band of Indians who cut wood for the fort. When the fort closed, he remained. He was paid \$25.00 per month for his teaching duties. Dr. Lindsley paid this salary and rent on the schoolroom in the upper floor of a dance hall until the Foreign Board of Mission picked up the cost. In 1877 Lindsley wrote to the secretary of the Foreign Board:

The work in Alaska has begun in the belief that American Christians would sustain it. This grew out of encouragement by myself and General Howard that we would do something for Alaska. Mr. Mallory took possession of what was there found. He hired Philip Simpsian (McKay), the teacher for three months. He made me responsible for all and I had no desire to go back on it. Nay, I accepted the charge as the will of God and we could not pause. It seems to me plainly the dictates of Providence that we should take charge of this Mission. It stands in my name as I have assumed its support. I apply to you and to the Board of Home Missions to take it off my hands.

Sheldon Jackson, having been asked by Dr. Lindsley to "reconnoiter the Alaskan ground" passed through Portland and First Church on his way to the Territory and met Mrs. Amanda McFarland here. McFarland was an experienced mission worker and a woman with an indomitable spirit. She and her late husband had been involved in mission endeavors in Illinois (when it was still the frontier), New Mexico, and Idaho. She was prevailed upon to accompany

Jackson on his trip to Alaska. They arrived in Fort Wrangle on August 10, 1877, two days after her 45th birthday. The fort at Wrangel had been closed and the only representative of law and order—beyond the law and order of Indian culture—was a customs commissioner. McFarland was to be the only white woman in the settlement. And soon even Sheldon Jackson would leave her, returning east to raise money for a school and home in Wrangel. Amanda McFarland, however, was not lacking in Christian fellowship. She was welcomed by a group of about forty Indian Christians who already lived there—the converts of Philip McKay. Amanda McFarland took over the responsibilities of teacher with the assistance of McKay and an Indian woman named Sarah Dickson, who served as her interpreter.

The teacher soon realized that the needs of her students reached far beyond a mere education and spiritual enlightenment. She was distressed by the active selling of young girls, often by their parents, into prostitution, and soon opened a girls' home in a former hospital building in the fort complex. One story told as a testimony to her courage in defense of the weak accounts how she rescued two girls from a night of physical and psychological torture. The two had been accused of witchcraft and spirited away by a mob of angry men. In agony of mind she set out to release them. Her friends implored her not to go, 'for they are having a devil dance and will kill you.' As Mrs. McFarland's life had been threatened several times, special anxiety now prevailed among her friends. Sarah Dickinson threw her arms around her and, weeping, declared she was going to her death. The converted Indians, at other times so bold, warned her to desist from a hopeless errand; but, up the beach alone, hurried that Christian teacher to where her two poor girls were bound hand and foot, stripped naked, in the center of fifty dancing and frantic fiends who with yells cut the victims with knives and tore out pieces of their flesh. Forcing her way to the side of the captives, in spite of threats and execrations, Mrs. McFarland stood warning and pleading the wrath of the United States, and after hours of the dauntless persistency cowed the wretched and took off the half-dead girls

Amanda McFarland's school and home in Wrangel burned to the ground in 1883. The Home Mission Board, rather than rebuilding the school, transferred McFarland and those of her students how would go, to the school begun earlier by Fannie Kellogg and John G. Brady in 1878 in Sitka. This would later become Sheldon Jackson College.

In 1879 Dr. and Mrs. Lindsley, Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon Jackson, Dr. and Mrs. Kendal (senior secretary of the Board of Home Mission) and Miss Maggie J.

Dunbar (who had been called to serve as principal teacher at Ft. Wrangle in the Tlingit Training Academy for Boys) embarked on a trip to the Alaskan Territory. During the trip Dr. Lindsley, acting on behalf of the Presbytery of Oregon, helped organize the first Presbyterian Church in the Alaskan Territory, the Presbyterian Church in Wrangel, which last year celebrated its 125th anniversary.

WORK AMONG CHINESE AMERICANS IN PORTLAND

By 1884 the Chinese population in Portland had reached approximately 4,000 in number. The need for mission work among the Chinese population was first noticed and addressed by Dr. Lindsley and First Church member Ling Chung in 1880. In April of that year Ling Chung met with the Session and reported that he and Lindsley had visited many of the Chinese merchants in the city and had obtained generous contributions from them for a school. In 1885 the Board of Foreign Missions assigned the Rev. and Mrs. W.S. Holt to work among the Chinese people in Portland. A room in a house on Yamhill Street was secured and a night school begun. Six months later the school had grown to a total of more than fifty students. In connection with the school, a Sunday School and Chinese preaching service were added. An article in the January 1886 edition of "The Church Bells" notes that "we do not aim so much at education as at Christianization, knowing full well that in the train of our holy religion follow advancement in education, higher civilization and purer morality, than can be received by any other system. The manifest duty of the Church to do this work needs no urging." The article goes on to defend the work against criticism from those who would just as soon have seen the Chinese leave Portland. "It (the work) is entirely separate from all likes and dislikes, from all opinions as to the desirableness of a Mongolian population, from all questions of competition in labor The love of God, the love of man, the love of self, all combine to press upon us our responsibility." The first two converts were baptized in the church at Third and Washington Streets in the Sabbath evening service and their names were duly added to the church's roll.

Another work focused exclusively among Chinese women. First Church member Mrs. Don Faih (Ah Ho) was an active leader in this work along with Mrs. Holt and other First Church women. Literacy training, preaching, worship, and religious education were not the only interests of the mission. Visits were made in homes throughout the city and the need for a place of refuge for Chinese women and girls was early recognized. A profitable traffic in female slavery and prostitution was being conducted in the city. Many Chinese women were owned and hired out as prostitutes, while little girls were being kept in slavery and

trained for the same life. Some had been kidnapped in China and brought to the states. Others had been purchased from poor families with the promise of kind treatment and marriage. Still others had been sold to respectable families in a sort of indentured servitude, but then in times of financial duress sold to less honorable owners. Many of these women and girls were being beaten, starved, and chained. The Home began with one Chinese woman who sought shelter with the Holts. Not long after, a second woman sought shelter, then a third.

The work of the Home was far from passive. While women did seek it out, the Home also sought out women in need. Its leaders sought and gained custody of young girls "growing up in houses of infamy," helped women through the maze of the legal system, and gave them courage to break with the life of exploitation which was the only life that many of them had known. In the Home they were taught to read and speak English and to read Chinese, Bible study and instruction in housekeeping skills were also a part of their education.

The volunteer work of Ah Ho was of significant importance and was highly appreciated. One tribute noted:

Mrs. Don Fair's interest in the Chinese mission here dates from the summer of 1885, when the mission was opened. She was a most valuable helper. She was well known in Portland among her own people. She was in sympathy with those in distress and in opposition to all evildoers. Knowing her own people she knew how to help them and also how to circumvent them when that was necessary, as it often was. There was no woman too low for her to visit, no man too proud for her to approach. There was no distress which she was not ready to relieve, and no sin of outrage she feared to rebuke. She was fertile in expedients, fearless in any danger, and counted no trouble or weariness or labor too great, if she could render a needed service. Her own debased countrywomen never had a better friend. Evil men feared her and slandered her, but she held steadily to her purpose, through evil and good report.

ANGELA FORD WARREN

In 1896 Dr. Angela Ford Warren began a remarkable ministry to and among young women. The Warren Bible Class as it became known began with two young women and soon numbered in the hundreds. The class originally met

in the chapel gallery (now the choir room) and after the construction of the Parish House met in the Whitman Room. The class was carefully organized and reached beyond the Sunday morning hour in its focus and ministry. In addition to regular officers there were five committees, whose members were appointed by Dr. Warren, and the class itself was divided into five sections, with a captain over each. The purpose was to solicit new members to the class and to keep in touch with continuing members. Prospective members were called on by a captain and as many members of her section as possible. After attendance in class for three weeks, the new member was added to the roll. Each captain was given a card bearing this message: "Be Enthusiastic. Inspire every member of your Section to work. Work with them faithfully. Talk 'Class' on all occasions. Instruct each member of our Section to talk 'Class' and to talk with Enthusiasm." Section members were also instructed to "visit stores and other places where large numbers of young women are employed, speak to their personal friends, and also to any young women whom they may casually meet." There were also cards made available to class members for distribution. The cards invited the recipients to visit the class that met at 12:10 p.m. following the worship service on Sunday. It also noted "Before taking up the lesson study, AN ATTRACTIVE SONG SERVICE is held in the main auditorium of the Church, in which service THE YOUNG MEN'S BIBLE CLASS unites. This large chorus of voices is accompanied by a violin club of young ladies." In addition to these recruitment efforts, two or more members of the class were stationed at the church doors each Sunday prior to service to meet young women visiting the church and to invite them to class. There was also a direct mail approach. Lists of young women employed in department stores, factories, etc., were obtained from their employers and a letter of invitation was mailed to each. At the end of the year the others feted the captain and the members of her section who had secured the most new members.

A mandolin and guitar club, the violin club, and a chorus enhanced the esprit de corps of the Warren Bible Class. There was an annual banquet, two receptions, an end of the year party at the home of the Warrens, and monthly outings during the summer months when the class did not meet. There was even a "class yell."—"Who are, who are, who are we? We are, we are, the W.B.C. what is our slogan, do you ask? We build character, that is our task." There was even a recreation song to the tune of "Marching Through Georgia." There was also a class pin. More than 2,700 young women passed through the ranks of the class over the years of its existence.

In 1916 Dr. Warren organized the Warren Vesper Class for young women and young men. The class met at 4:00 each Sunday afternoon and like the Bible Class began with a song service "led by an orchestra and a wide awake chorister." A musical program given by the Warren Vesper Class Orchestra and soloists followed the song service. Following the lesson was a social hour in which the class members could mingle. This class, as well organized as the Bible Class, featured in its structure a "Street Solicitation Committee." The committee, which was composed of twenty couples under the supervision of a captain, met at 3:00 p.m. each Sunday in a downtown office. After twenty minutes of prayer, each couple received their street assignments. Beginning nine blocks from the church, each walked towards Twelfth and Alder Streets greeting other young adults and offering invitation cards to the class meeting. The Warren Vesper Class, like its counterpart, was a remarkable success and continued, as did the Bible Class for Young Women until Dr. Warren's death in 1930.

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