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# RURAL CHURCH DAY

Sunday, May Third

1914

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*"I point to the skies  
But my footstone lies  
In the commonplace work of the day."*

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## THE RURAL CHURCH

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In some great day  
The Country Church  
Will find its voice  
And it will say:

"I stand in the fields  
Where the wide earth yields  
Her bounties of fruit and grain;  
Where the furrows turn  
Till the plowshares burn  
As they come round and round again;  
Where the workers pray  
With their tools all day  
In sunshine and shadow and rain.

"And I bid them tell  
Of the crops they sell  
And speak of the work they have done;  
I speed every man  
In his hope and plan  
And follow his day with the sun;  
And grasses and trees,  
The birds and the bees  
I know and feel ev'ry one.

"And out of it all  
As the seasons fall  
I build my great temple alway;  
I point to the skies,  
But my footstone lies  
In the commonplace work of the day;  
For I preach the worth  
Of the native earth—  
To love and to work is to pray."  
—Liberty H. Bailey.

# RURAL CHURCH DAY

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## THE PURPOSE OF RURAL CHURCH DAY.

Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

The country church has made, and is still making, a mighty contribution to the enrichment of all life. Every city congregation is greatly indebted for the constant stream of enriched life that has been poured into it from the rural church.

This is in harmony with the plan of our Master, who believed in life in the open country, for though he was reared as a village carpenter most of his parables have to do with the life of the farmer: "Consider the lilies of the field"; "Behold a sower went forth to sow", etc. Most of his ministry was spent with country people. Therefore it is fitting that we consider what His Church is doing and what it should do to build up the "life" of the country communities which it serves, and thus in its fulness answer His prayer, "Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."

To this end has Governor Hatfield called all the people of the rural communities of our State to meet on Sunday, May third to consider the work of the Country Church.

It is a well known fact that during the past generation there has been a trend from the country toward the city. In West Virginia there are 180 magisterial districts having no incorporated towns. Of these districts, 96 have increased 27 per cent—largely due to mining population, while 84 districts have decreased in population 18.8 per cent—the latter including many of the best agricultural districts of the state. The reasons for this movement have been both economic and social. Students of history and sociology are agreed that the best life of all nations has developed in the country, that city populations have never shown the virility of rural people, that country life offers superior advantages for the development of strong personal character, and that the people of the open country will be chiefly responsible for the maintenance of those ideals of American life which our forefathers established.

What, then, is the present position of the country church? What is its influence and what is its duty and opportunity? It must be admitted that there are many rural churches, especially in our villages, which are either dead, dying, or have but irregular services and do not render as efficient service for the uplifting of their communities as they might. The reasons for such conditions vary and need not be discussed in detail. A few conclusions are, however, most obvious. (1) A live church cannot be maintained in a dead community. The church is



therefore dependent upon the economic conditions of its people. (2) A church cannot be maintained in a country district in which people cannot develop a satisfying life. The church is therefore dependent upon those institutions which make better life possible, including good schools, good roads, and good society. (3) A country church cannot thrive if its people simply exist in the country through necessity, but who prefer town or city life and leave the country as soon as they are financially able. The country church is therefore, dependent upon the ideals of its people. (4) A church can re-create any community by inspiring its people to the better development of its natural resources and of their God-given talents, by inspiring them to foster better roads, schools, business, and social organizations and thus make a larger life possible, and by filling them with such a love of God and his creation that they will find the life and work of the farm so fully satisfying that they will devote themselves to establishing the Kingdom of God in their midst.

It may be said that it is not the business of the church to take up social movements, but to save souls. Read the Great Commandment (St. Luke 10; 25-28) and see what Jesus required for salvation. And when asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he immediately told the story of the Good Samaritan, to show what he meant by loving "thy neighbor as thyself".

The Kingdom of God is not composed of self-righteous individuals who are in a static condition of right-relationship to God, but who care naught for their fellows. If we love God, we must love our neighbors; this is the obvious lesson of the Good Samaritan. Too many farmers are individualists and live solely unto themselves or their immediate families. There are many reasons for this, historic and social. Too often the farmer is satisfied if he can maintain himself and return his one talent. (See St. Matthew, 25:14-30.) Only through neighborly co-operation can farmers be on a business basis which will enable them to secure a fair distribution of the wealth they create in competition with the immense aggregations of capital seeking profitable investment. The Danish and European farmers have demonstrated the profitableness of co-operation. But co-operation will only come through dire necessity or from a real spirit of love for the common good and a desire to promote the general welfare. Many people have failed to grasp the full significance of what Christ meant by the Kingdom of God on Earth. The mission of the Church does not include the promotion of better agriculture, better roads, or better schools, though it may be well for it to aid in securing them. It must, however, be the greatest force for inspiring its people to the highest development of community life, or it loses its opportunity and fails in its mission.

No one has better expressed the sphere of the country church than Rev. M. B. McNutt, the pastor

of a country church which was most successful in serving its community and bringing its people to God. "Suppose the boys, and others for that matter, have received the message of salvation which the church has given them and have become disciples of Christ. What then? Are they simply to rest the remainder of their lives in the consciousness of this peaceful state and find their chiefest enjoyment in the thought alone, that they are saved? A lot of them get excused from the monotony, when there is nothing else to follow. Many more wish that they were out and still others remain good but are good for nothing, so far as building up the community in things that are worth while are concerned."

"People are saved to serve. They are not only saved from something but to something. The church is full of people that gloat over their personal salvation, who at the same time have not the least interest in saving anybody else. Church life and business is bound to become insipid and drag where the gospel of social service is not preached along with the gospel of salvation and where Christian people are not trained to co-operate and lend themselves to the good of all in the community.

"There is a great power centered in the Christian people of the community that has never been harnessed to anything. Country preachers and evangelists have been working solely for the conversion of the farmer and have been satisfied when this is accomplished, failing to set before him any definite form of service. A power of any kind is useless unless it is harnessed to some worthy object or task. A saved man is of little use in the Kingdom until he becomes active in saving others and in transforming the community where he lives."

"The rural church or other religious body in a community must show itself friendly if it would have friends. It must minister to the needs of the people, it must spend itself in helpful service, if it would commend itself to men—if it would prosper and live."

"When a church once gets a reputation in a community for helping the helpless, for befriending the friendless, for showing mercy to the poor, for rendering a cheerful, loving, helpful service to all in need, there is no question about it becoming a church full of life—a church that will command the respect, the co-operation, and the support of everybody."

"Make the church minister to the people, let it lose itself in holy, practical service and it will be alive and thrive mightily. This is the way to give vitality to all the country churches."\*

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\*Vitalizing the Rural Religious Forces, Rev. M. B. McNutt, Country Life Conference Addresses. Extension Bulletin No. 12, Iowa State College, March, 1913.



## II.—A SUGGESTIVE CHURCH PROGRAM WITH THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY.

The services on Rural Church Day should inspire all with a greater zeal for the work of the rural churches of West Virginia. They should be so planned that every one present may have a definite idea of the mission and power of the church and be aroused to work for the upbuilding of the church and the community.

Familiar and inspiring songs should be selected; such as,

“I Love Thy Kingdom Lord”,  
“Onward, Christian Soldiers”,  
“Work for the Night is Coming”,  
“Little Brown Church”,  
“West Virginia Hills”,  
“America”.

A few well selected poems such as the one found on page two may be made a part of the sermon or may be recited or read if preferred.

### A PRAYER FOR RURAL CHURCH DAY

#### *The Prayer of the Out of Doors.*

*Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being:*

*Thou art our Father; Thou art our God.*

*We praise Thee, we worship Thee, we yield Thee most hearty thanks for the glory of Thy presence in the great “out of doors”.*

*The mountains speak to us of Thy strength; may we be strong to serve.*

*The woods tell us of the lavishness of Thy love; do Thou shed abroad Thy love in our hearts.*

*The still waters speak peace to our souls; oh, may we know the peace which passeth all understanding!*

*The beauty of the sun fills us with gladness; may the beauty of holiness in our lives bring gladness to those around us.*

*The gentle rain cleanses, refreshes, brings us the power of growth; do Thou give us Thy Holy Spirit that we may be clean, bringing forth fruit to the uplifting of mankind, the extending of Thy Kingdom, the exalting of Thy Holy Name.*

*Our Father, Thou art the source of all joy; may we so enter into Thy joy that we shall reveal to others the glory of our God and of His son Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

*(From Rural Manhood.)*

The scripture and sermon text for the day should be carefully selected as to appropriateness.

**Suggestive Scripture Readings:**

Isaiah, Chapter 55.  
James, Chapter 2.  
I Corinthians, Chapter 13.  
Luke, Chapter 10; 15, 25, 37.

**Suggestive Sermon Texts:**

Luke, Chapter 22:52.  
Galatians, Chapter 6.  
John, Chapter 14:12.  
Romans, Chapter 15:1.  
Romans, Chapter 14:7.  
James, Chapter 2:14.

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**SUGGESTIVE PROGRAM.**

(Sunday School Service.)

- School called to order.....Superintendent  
(Wait for absolute quiet.)  
Reading of Governor's Proclamation—By a Young Man  
Song—(See Songs suggested in leaflet.) School  
standing.  
Prayer—(School remain standing until after Lord's  
Prayer.)  
Lord's Prayer—(By School in Concert.)  
Offering and Marking of Class Books.  
Announcements.  
Song—(To be selected.)  
Scripture Reading—(See suggestive references)  
By one who reads well.  
Scripture Theme—  
And Jesus increased in wisdom (mental) and  
stature, (physical) and in favor with God, (spiritual)  
and man (social).—Luke 2:52.  
Four Five-Minute Papers or Talks on the Four  
Divisions of the Theme.  
1.—The Rural Church's Part in Educational Work  
in the Community.  
2.—How the Church May Develop the Physical Life  
of the Community.  
Song—(To be selected).....By School  
or  
Solo—"Somebody Did a Golden Deed."  
3.—How the Rural Church Develops the Spiritual  
Life and Neighborly Service of the Com-  
munity.  
4.—Ways in which the Rural Church May Contribute  
to the Social Life and Recreation of the  
Community.  
Song—"Blest be the Tie that Binds"—By the School  
(Standing.)  
Silent Prayer—(All heads bowed).  
Closing Prayer.  
Greeting of Friends and Informal Discussion of  
Program.

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NOTE—This movement should be further promoted by the appointment of a committee at the close of the sermon to further study the relation of the church to the community and how it may be of greater service.



### III.—SUGGESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL WORK FOR THE RURAL CHURCH.

The following lines of community service have been successfully carried on by various country churches and are suggested for consideration. Select those which will be most desirable for your community and in which your people can be most readily enlisted.

#### 1. Survey.

Let the minister and his people make a study of their community, its institutions, conditions, tendencies and needs. How many people are not connected with a church? Who are they? Why are they neglected? Are the public schools adequate? Are the teachers satisfactory? What limits the better development of the community? These and many other factors which accelerate or retard progress should be considered.

#### 2. Encouraging Education.

The minister should take an active interest in the work and problems of the schools and should cooperate with the teachers in every way possible. He should visit the schools not only to talk, but to learn, and also to encourage the teachers and pupils. He should talk with the parents, with whom he may have a powerful influence in molding their sentiment for better schools which can more fully prepare their children for country life.

**Lyceum or Lecture Course.**—Hold a course of lectures, concerts and entertainments with local and outside talent. Several churches or young peoples' societies might unite in the management and support of such a course.

**Library.**—Let the church or sunday school maintain or circulate a library of general good literature and magazines with books on country life subjects and methods of sunday school and church work. Cooperate with other country churches or schools in the exchange of libraries. Many homes now lack good reading matter; why should the church not aid them to get it?

**Organizations.**—Let the church encourage the organization of Farmers' Clubs, Farm Women's Clubs, Granges, etc. for discussing the problems of country life and planning for its betterment, and if they have no better place for meeting, open the church to them when they wish to use it.



### 3. Encouraging Agriculture.

The church should inspire its people with a desire to know and appreciate nature and rural life.

The church can help the farmer by promoting a true spirit of brotherhood.

The church can develop consecrated leadership, which is essential for working out the agricultural problems of every rural community. Leadership is developed by working; not by talking.

The minister may aid in securing Farmers' Institutes. One-Week Agricultural Schools, Home Economics Schools for Women, Country Life Conferences, etc. with the co-operation of the Agricultural Extension Department of the College of Agriculture, West Virginia University, at Morgantown. He may encourage demonstrations on the farms which will prove the worth of modern methods of farming. He may help find leaders for Boys' Corn Clubs, Girls' Canning Clubs, Boy Scouts, and similar organizations. He may take an active part in encouraging his people to co-operate in the maintenance of better roads, and thus make possible better social life.

### 4. Encouraging Health.

Christ spent much of his time healing the sick. Most of our sickness is caused by poor sanitation, carelessness, and ignorance. The minister should inspire the physicians to work for the prevention rather than for the cure of disease. We will be better off when our religion not only recognizes that "cleanliness is next to Godliness", but that health is essential to Godliness (I Cor. 6:12-20.). Let the church in some way bring its people to recognize their moral and religious responsibility for the presence and spread of disease: that it is as great a wrong to kill a man by contaminating his drinking water with typhoid bacilli as to shoot him; and that disease breeds vice and vice breeds disease.

### 5. Promoting Recreation.

More people leave the country because of the assumed social advantages of the city than for any other one reason. Many of the problems of country life would cease to exist if people but knew each other better. If people will play together, they will work together.

**Celebrate Annual Events.**—Have programs which enlist the interest of all the people.

New Years' Eve sociable for young and old; suitable games and exercises.

Easter Celebration; music, flowers, reception of new members.

Children's Day; exercises by the children of all ages.

Memorial Day; services for the veterans; decoration of graves.

Fourth of July; a community celebration; field day, athletic contests, orations, etc.

Annual Sunday School Picnic; something for everyone, games, contests.

Annual Church Reunion in early fall; all friends of the church spend the day together with dinner at noon, music, addresses, messages from absent ones, memorial service for those who have passed away during the year, reports, etc.

Thanksgiving Day and Harvest Home Festival.

Christmas Concert and Celebration with good cheer for every one in the community.

A special feature for this year may well be a watch service on the evening of June 30, when state-wide prohibition will become effective at midnight, marking the most important hour in the history of the State since it was founded.

**Organized Recreation.** Have one or more baseball teams among the boys and teach them true morality and religion in their play.

Have all-day meetings for women's and girls' societies with luncheon at noon.

Have a monthly meeting for young men for debates, musical and literary programs. This sort of work with the athletic work for young men may be organized as a local Young Men's Christian Association.

Have a singing school during the winter months; which will attract both young and old and will put new life into the service of song.

Have sociables in the church, entirely free. Play games in which all may join or have contests which will get everybody acquainted, and in summer hold these out-of-doors with grounds decorated with lanterns.

#### IV.—BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS ON THE COUNTRY CHURCH.

The Church of the Open Country, Warren H. Wilson, Missionary Education Movement, New York, 50 cents.

The Country Church and the Rural Problem. Kenyon L. Butterfield, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. \$1.08.

The Day of the Country Church. J. O. Ashenhurst, Funk and Wagnalls Co., New York. \$1.00.

The Evolution of the Country Community. Warren H. Wilson, The Pilgrim Press, Boston, Mass. \$1.25.

The Story of John Frederick Oberlin. A. F. Beard, The Pilgrim Press, Boston, Mass. \$1.25.

Report of the Country Life Commission. Sturgis and Walton, New York. \$0.75.

The Rural Church Message (Men and Religion Movement). Association Press, New York.

The Rural Church in Community Service. G. F. Wells, (reprint), The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ, 215 Fourth Ave., New York. Free.

Modern Methods in the Country Church. M. B. McNutt, and The Village Church in the Open Country by Silas E. Persons. Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 156 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y., 5 cents each. This Board also publishes several leaflets which will be sent free.



### Books on the Country Life Movement.

- The Country Life Movement. L. H. Bailey, The Macmillan Co., New York. \$1.25.
- The Rural Life Problem. Sir Horace Plunkett, The Macmillan Co., New York. \$1.25.
- Chapters in Rural Progress. K. L. Butterfield, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. \$1.00.
- The Challenge of the Country. G. W. Fiske, The Association Press, New York. \$0.50.
- Principles of Rural Economics. T. N. Carver, Ginn and Co., Boston, Mass. \$1.25.
- Rural Manhood, a monthly magazine devoted to the county work of the Young Men's Christian Association, The Association Press, New York. \$1.00 per year. The best publication on work for country boys and young men.

### WHERE TO SECURE LITERATURE AND HELP CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY.

- The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Commission on the Church and Social Service, Rev. Chas. S. MacFarland, Secretary, 215 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.
- Methodist Episcopal. Methodist Federation of Social Service, Rev. Harry F. Ward, Secretary, 2512 Park Place, Evanston, Ill.
- Protestant Episcopal. The Joint Commission on Social Service of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Field Secretary, Rev. F. M. Crouch, 281 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.
- Baptist. Rev. Samuel Z. Batten, Secretary of the Baptist Department of Social Service and Brotherhood, 1701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.
- Presbyterian. Rev. Warren H. Wilson, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Department of the Church and Country Life, 156 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.
- Young Men's Christian Association. The County Work Department, International Committee, Y. M. C. A., 124 E. 28th St., New York, N. Y.
- Young Women's Christian Association. Miss Jessie Field, Secretary Town and Country Committee, National Board Y. W. C. A., 600 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.
- The Home Mission Boards, or their Secretaries, of any denomination.

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Additional copies of this circular may be obtained free from the Agricultural Extension Department, College of Agriculture, West Virginia University, Morgantown.

## BETTER COUNTRY LIFE DEMANDS:

The Church as a Center for the Building of the Community.

The Federation and Co-operation of all the Churches in the Community in Order to Make the People One.

The Consolidation of Rural Schools for the Education of Young Men and Women for Life in the Country.

The Promotion of Scientific Agriculture in order to Conserve the Soil for our Children.

To Produce Abundance for the Consumer and to Keep the Farmer's Income abreast of the Rising Price of Land.

The Leadership in Social Recreation for the Moral Development of the Youth and Workingmen of the Community.

Better Living Conditions in the Interests of the Future; and the Cherishing of the History of the Community in Memory of Past Days.

Such Ministry to the Community that Pauperism shall be excluded and the burden of Poverty Lifted.

The Preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ all the time and in every Community.