

The Church Today

According to the *Journal of the 101st Annual Convention* (1953), the Diocese of Iowa reports 68 parishes and missions, and 11,015 communicants in 60 communities. Forty-three of the clergy are actively employed in cures of souls, while 15 are retired or engaged in other work. In the course of its history, the Episcopal Church has had establishments in more than three hundred cities, towns, or villages in Iowa, and has at times reported more than a hundred parishes and missions. Much of this was mere paper strength. But the Episcopal Church in Iowa today, in terms of communicants, giving, and services, is stronger than at any previous time in its history.

Two general organizations receive official recognition in the *Journal* — the Women's Auxiliary, and the Episcopal Men of Iowa. Of these, the former has by far the longer record of service. Its importance to the diocese would warrant a separate history. The Episcopal Men of Iowa was begun under the auspices of Bishop Haines and is not yet ten years of age.

The Diocese of Iowa maintains two schools, both for girls or women, St. Katharine's in Davenport and St. Monica's in Des Moines. The former

is all that remains of the ill-fated Griswold College except a board of trustees to administer the scanty remains of its endowment. Even the date of its death is shrouded in obscurity. The diocese has officially recognized Grinnell as its college, and the bishop is one of the trustees.

The diocese has contributed to build the church and parish house at Ames and the student center at Iowa City. Plans are being made to build a chapel at Grinnell. College work is conducted through the local parishes and through Canterbury Clubs among the students.

The diocese maintains Camp Morrison at Clear Lake, which is now the special charge of the Episcopal Men of Iowa. A series of meetings is held there throughout the summer. A chapel, a dormitory, a dining-hall, and several cottages have been built.

St. Luke's Hospital in Davenport was founded by the Episcopal Church and still continues as an official organization of the diocese, though its support comes from the entire community independent of church lines. Other hospitals begun under the direction of the Church have ceased to have an official connection with it. So, too, have other less conspicuous community activities once in name Episcopalian.

All churches in the Anglican fellowship inherit a tradition of responsibility for the welfare, economic, moral, and social, of the entire community

that accords with a state church. In the United States, where the Episcopal Church represented in most sections a distinct minority and where its past made any political activity suspect, the position of most Churchmen during the nineteenth century was that the Church as such had no concern with politics. Even issues such as Abolition and Prohibition, which aroused great fervor in many Protestant bodies, were for the most part officially ignored by the Episcopal Church. Both Bishop Kemper and Bishop Lee held firmly to this position. When the two bishops visited Kansas in the middle 1850's, they made no mention of politics. Bishop Lee, though a strong Unionist, deprecated any mention of the Civil War in sermons. Bishop Kemper ignored that war in his correspondence until it was more than half over.

The Episcopal Church in Iowa is, therefore, notably less active than are many other churches in interdenominational movements to advance social causes. Though a Committee on Christian Social Relations is part of the diocesan organization, the part played by that committee has not been conspicuous. A resolution urging greater activity in securing a world federation was tabled in the diocesan convention in 1952 on the expressed conviction that upon all such matters the Church did well to remain silent. Though conventions in Iowa have not always taken this position — a similar motion was passed in convention in 1948 — the

action of 1952 is probably quite typical. Probably most Episcopalians in Iowa justify this caution by the experience of many Protestant bodies in supporting Prohibition.

The Episcopal Church in Iowa has been cautious also in participating in other inter-church movements. It was not until 1948 that, under strong pressure from Bishop Haines, the diocesan convention voted to participate in the Iowa Inter-Church Council. Movements such as the one for an organic union with the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., have had tepid support.

Episcopalians acquainted with the most humane teaching of the Anglican communion keep in mind two points when they consider the claim their Church makes to uniqueness. First, no single Christian group can claim monopoly of the grace of God, and no Christian should presume to limit the ways in which God may help man. Second, human experience seems to show that not all means of grace are equally suitable, effective, or permanent, and that intelligent Christians of good will may properly make distinction among the ways by which aid from God best reaches man.

An Episcopalian may properly hold, indeed he should hold, that the means of grace his Church provides have, for certain sorts of men, excellences that he cannot find in the means that certain other Christian churches provide. He may further hold, perhaps he must further hold, that the means of

grace on which he relies have, when viewed historically, surety and permanence not as readily apparent in the means on which other Christian bodies rely. And he may contend with some reason that recent developments in American Christianity support Episcopal convictions. He would hold that particularly significant is the increasing emphasis on the part that the Church must play in preserving Christianity, the increasing use of formal worship, the general acceptance of the belief that children can be born into the Church, and the wish for sacraments.

In support of this position, an Episcopalian can cite such statements as that of a present-day student of Church History: "The tendency of many people, whether they are friendly or unfriendly to the Christian faith, to distinguish between the faith and the 'church' is a sign of Christian weakness, for actually it is impossible to be a Christian believer apart from the social reality of the 'church.' "

For the present, Episcopalians, like all men of good will, Christian or otherwise, must do the best they can from the knowledge given them and the faith based on that knowledge, and in so acting trust in what secularists like to call the "future" and Christians prefer to call God.

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