

Chapter 16

Conference in Baltimore, Md. Appointed to Cumberland Circuit, Cumberland County

Conference again convened in the Green Street Evangelical Church,¹ Baltimore, the first Thursday in March 1872. It was customary in our conferences to have a sermon preached on the subject of missions, and after the sermon to solicit subscriptions. We generally succeeded well on such occasions. The ministers, though they did not receive large salaries, yet contributed quite liberally to missions – and their contributions were largely given at these conference meetings. At this conference, the Sabbath was devoted to the work of missions, and the evening to the ordination of young ministers to whom ordination had been voted. We have two ordinations. A young man is first received on probation – and not having been previously educated for the ministry, a regularly prescribed course of study, covering four years, is given to him. If at the end of two years, on examination, he is accounted worthy, he is ordained deacon – when he is invested with all the functions of a minister of the gospel. But previous to this – that is, his first two years – he is only authorized to preach and dare not perform the marriage ceremony, baptize, or administer the communion. If at the end of two years more he is found faithful and worthy, he is ordained elder – and now only is he in full connection and eligible to any office in the ministry. Hence at the same time some are ordained deacons and others elders – the one having traveled two, and the other four years.

At this conference we had the most successful missionary meeting I ever attended. The subscriptions and collections in the morning amounted to one thousand dollars, and at the children's meeting in the afternoon it was eight hundred dollars – or eighteen hundred dollars in all. Of this amount, one man gave five hundred – but only one hundred in his own name. As in all congregations, they had quite a number of poor members who were unable to give much. So for their encouragement, he would tell this one privately, you subscribe so much – and another, so much. And he gave liberally at the children's meeting for their encouragement, until the above amount was reached. On Monday this same brother came into conference and donated notes amounting to three thousand dollars, being his claim against our Mission Church in Washington D.C.² – making a total of four thousand and eight hundred dollars for missions during that conference, three

¹ Built in 1852, the Green Street Church housed a German congregation, those members who preferred the English language having organized the Memorial (later Walbrook Memorial) congregation in 1870. This congregation became a charter member of the German-speaking Atlantic Conference in 1876 and relocated to the western suburbs in the 1920's. The site is now part of the University of Maryland Medical Center adjacent to Baltimore's Inner Harbor area.

² This work was not successful and was shuffled back and forth between the Central Pennsylvania Conference, the denomination's Board of Missions, and the Atlantic Conference before being sold in 1887. The Evangelical denomination did not establish a permanent church in Washington D.C., Albright Memorial, until the 1920's.

thousand five hundred from this one man. O for more such men in all our churches. I was slightly acquainted with this man and have been to see him in his home.

The brother by whom I was entertained during conference, and who was also well fixed, informed me that this man was a poor house boy. He started in the world without one cent to begin with, but he became a Christian in his youth. And when he began life for himself, he promised to give one tenth of his income to the Lord – and did so. He began as a baker in Baltimore by purchasing a barrel of flour, and peddled his bread through the city on a wheel-barrow. The Lord prospered him, and he continued baking and increasing his business – and branched out into the pickling and canning business. And at that time he was supposed to be worth near two million dollars. Surely, what is given to the Lord is not lost, and we see in his case the promise of the Lord Jesus “give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” – Luke 6:38.

At this conference I was assigned to Cumberland Circuit, Cumberland County, with parsonage in New Kingston. We moved to Kingston on wagons, and when we arrived at the parsonage we found it filled with kind friends, awaiting our arrival, while the table fairly groaned under the load of good things – which furnished all with a most excellent dinner. They gave us a grand reception. Cumberland was a most pleasant and convenient circuit consisting of Kingston, Kutz’s Church³ and Middlesex – three appointments, and they were not far apart, and most excellent roads.

In Kingston we had a fine church and parsonage. At Middlesex we preached in a school house, but they now have a fine church there. The Kutz’s Church was an old brick building, and in a dilapidated condition – but a good and wealthy membership. During the year we rebuilt and enlarged this church, making a handsome and commodious church of it, which was re-opened and dedicated in December. A brother from Harrisburg, and a member of the East Pennsylvania Conference, assisted me at the dedication and preached the dedicatory sermon.

But the great draw back on this charge was a heavy debt resting on the parsonage, which also involved the Kingston Church. This had arisen through mismanagement and caused great dissatisfaction. Everything through it was thrown into confusion, and therefore it could not be paid at that time. As a consequence, we were threatened with the sheriff before we had been there one week. But by lending the congregation one hundred dollars myself, we succeeded with difficulty in getting proceedings stayed for one year – hoping that conference would do something for us at its next meeting. The debt was finally paid, and the property secured to the church, but it occasioned great trouble – and I did not get my money for some time, and then only little by little. I donated part of it, and had

³ Kutz’s Church is now known as Letort UMC. The original brick building was erected in 1841 and faced north. While Dieterich’s account seems to suggest that the present east-facing 1872 building was a major remodeling of the first structure, the local church history describes it as a new building “near the site” of the first structure.

a public referee with the pastor – which was very unpleasant to me, though I was successful in my suit against him. This was the only difficulty I ever had with any of my brethren in the ministry – but I was compelled to proceed against him, or lose my money.

I found this a very pleasant charge, with the exception of the above difficulty, and the friends treated us with the greatest of kindness. Here the health of my wife began to fail in the beginning of the year, and to lighten her labor I purchased a “Singer sewing machine” – for which I paid eighty-five dollars – and also a “Yankee washer and wringer” for twenty dollars. Both were good machines, thus lessening her labor. With proper medical treatment, her health improved until it was fully restored again.

This summer I had the pleasure of attending a district Sunday School convention in Leesburg. This was the first convention of the kind ever held in the district – and the first convention of the kind I had ever attended. I drove up accompanied by my eldest son Eugene. We had an interesting convention and a pleasant time.

The friends in Leesburg informed me of a family residing in Jacksonville, two miles from Leesburg, whom I had admitted to membership while pastor there, stating that the wife was sick and that she was very anxious to see me. So on our way home, as we passed her door, we stopped at the gate. Leaving Eugene in the buggy, I entered the sick room and found her in bed, almost at the end – with that fell⁴ destroyer, consumption. She was but a young married woman, but I saw at once she was very weak and near the end. She was very glad to see me. I inquired as to her prospects for the future, when she assured me that all was well – and spoke very cheerfully of the change she knew was so near at hand, and rejoiced in the bright hope of soon being with Jesus to behold his glory. I sang a verse or two, and then knelt by her bedside in prayer. While I was praying God blessed us powerfully, and she began to shout and praise God with a loud voice and clapping of hands. I left her shouting. Eugene could hear her as he sat in the buggy out in the street. In a few days she breathed her last, and went home to glory. O how blessed thus to die.

On our way home we stopped to see another sick lady who had sent for me. This family lived on my charge. But O, what a contrast. This was a young lady about eighteen years of age, now near the point of death. The family were not religious, and did not even attend church. The father was at work in the yard but did not even speak to me, nor come into the house while I was there. The mother and grandmother were in the room. I talked to her, read the Bible to her, and prayed for her – but the dying girl manifested no concern. The mother and grandmother were most deeply affected and wept bitterly, but she was unmoved. So I left her, and so she died. It was no doubt owing to her lack of religious instruction and

⁴ This is a no longer common use of “fell” as an adjective meaning “terrible” or “dreadful.”

training – and her parents will be responsible for her. O, what a fearful account such parents will have to give on the last great day! I went home most deeply impressed with the different state of feelings of these two persons both near the point of death – and I thought, what a power there is in the religion of Jesus Christ. Surely it is worth living for, and worth laboring for. O, that all might realize its saving power.

In the fall I attended what was termed a “village camp” in Carlisle. But we did not accomplish much, as the small-pox was raging fearfully in that beautiful town at the time – and the red flags apprising the passerby of the presence of the small-pox in the house could be seen quite frequently on both sides of the street on which the church was located. So we were obliged to close the meeting at the end of the first week. The small-pox prevailed to an alarming extent, and many died from it – but how many none could tell, as all were buried at night without any funeral.

I also held meetings at all my appointments during the winter. In Kingston and Middlesex the meetings were quite successful, but I have no account of the number of conversions and accessions. During the meeting in Kingston, the friends at Kutz’s and Middlesex made a surprise donation one evening amounting to seventy dollars. This was the first time we had ever been treated in that way. It came very good to us, and was very highly appreciated by us – and apparently very much enjoyed by the friends in attendance. The now Rev. H.W. Gross,⁵ I think, was the head of it. May he frequently be treated in a similar way during his ministry is all that I can wish him in return for the interest he manifested on this occasion.

During this meeting there was a certain school teacher (whose name I might mention, but will not) who was a large, burly looking young man whose weight was about two hundred – and who felt so important that he could scarcely get clothes to fit him.⁶ He was teaching school in an adjoining district, and he was in the habit of coming to town every evening and spending part of the evening in our village school house with the teacher of the primary department of our school. About the time preaching would be over, both would come into the church and take their seats well in front. They would sit and talk and laugh during the altar exercises – to the annoyance of the congregation, as we had a goodly number of penitents forward. This was repeated night after night, until my attention was called to it by some of the friends and patrons of the village school. That evening Rev. A.W.

⁵ Harry W. Gross (dates unknown) was licensed and appointed to his first charge in 1877. He was dismissed from the conference (i.e., from the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church) in 1898. In 1897 he tried to transfer himself and his Hagerstown congregation to the Baltimore Conference of the ME South, and in 1898 he succeeded in such a transfer to the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association. He later had personal problems and withdrew under charges in 1902 – and a presiding elder was given a suspension because his “actions in standing up for the Rev. Mr. Gross were not justified.”

⁶ In other words, “He was too big for his britches.”

Kreamer,⁷ from Lewisberry, York County, was with me but took no part in the services – as he was suffering from a very sore throat which has since caused his death, though but a young man. He was with us over night. As usual, these teachers came in and repeated the same act as before. I was standing at the altar in front of the pulpit, leading in singing, and watched them for some time – as they sat well up front. When I thought they had gone far enough, as I finished the hymn, I looked right at them as they were busy in conversation and remarked in a loud voice, “School teachers...” I then paused until they both looked up into my face, when I added, “...should be examples for their scholars. Let us pray.” After prayer, both arose and left the church.

When the services had closed for the evening, all had left but Kreamer, the sexton and myself – as I generally remained in the church until last, so as to cool off before going out into the snow. I now started out the one aisle, and Kreamer followed me, while the sexton passed out the other one. When I came down into the vestibule, it being a two story church, here, at the foot of the steps, stood the two teachers side by side – the big, burly man standing first, for he was to be the spokesman and cow me down. We bade each other good evening, when the following conversation ensued.

“Did you have reference to us when you spoke up there in the church this evening?”

“Yes, sir, I did.”

“Well, I am sorry you said it.”

“I am not sorry I said it – but I am sorry there was occasion for saying it.”

“I wish you had come to us privately.”

“It was a public offence, and it called for a public rebuke.”

“Our conversation was in harmony with the meeting.”

“I know nothing as to the subject of your conversation, but there was too much hilarity connected with it to be of a religious nature – and this is not the first evening. You come to town every evening and spend the evening in our school house with our teacher here, who teaches our children during the day. Then when preaching is about over you both come to church, take your seats well up in front, and sit and talk and laugh all the time. And your scholars, who attend church here, look at you and they say, ‘If the teachers can do so, we can do so too.’ Hence look at the influence which you exert. As I said, ‘Teachers should be examples for their scholars.’ My attention was directed to your conduct today by the patrons of your school, and hence the rebuke.”

“Well, you will not be bothered with us very soon again.”

⁷ Aaron W. Kreamer (1844-1888) was born in Centre County into a solidly Evangelical family. His father John Kreamer was an Evangelical preacher, and his mother Sarah Rishel had a brother who was an Evangelical preacher and two sisters who married Evangelical preachers – one of who was Bishop W.W. Orwig. Licensed and given his first appointment in 1867, in 1872 he was serving the Conewago Circuit, which included Lewisberry. He located on account of continuing throat problems in 1882.

“As you see proper about that. You are welcome to come, but you must behave yourselves. If not, your room is better than your presence.”

They both said “Good night” and left.

I never saw this man since – but our teacher was young and had been led away by this man unthinkingly, and was benefited by this lesson. From that evening he attended preaching regularly, came in time, sat up well in front, and was a proper example for his scholars. When we got home Brother Kreamer said, “That was too good. I am glad you handled that teacher as you did. He expected to make you back down, but did not succeed very well. I had so much trouble with him last winter during meeting in Leesburg – he taught school up there then – and I could do nothing with him.” Kreamer enjoyed it hugely, as he had been out-generated by him the winter before. Kreamer, though a young man, has since died in Kansas.

At the request of Brother Kreamer, I attended and officiated at the corner stone laying for a church at Newberry, York County, and had a very pleasant time of it.⁸ It was in the summer, sometime after harvest. On the way down we stopped over night at Father Mergenthaler’s⁹ on that circuit, in whose house I had preached every two weeks for two years. It so happened that night that one of his daughters was married, and Brother Kreamer performed the ceremony. They had quite a wedding and a very pleasant time. Myself and wife were uninvited, and unexpected, but I am sure not unwelcome guests.

In the winter I was sent for to come down to Lewisberry to preach the funeral sermon for brother John Kline,¹⁰ one of our old neighbors. The funeral was to take place on Sabbath morning at Emmanuel’s Church. We went down on Saturday afternoon. It was very cold – and splendid sleighing. We took with us the baby Carrie and George – now a chunk of a boy – as he had always been a pet of Mr. Kline’s and must attend the funeral. We stayed overnight with brother Parks, who had come up for me. In the night, George took sick and had a severe attack of pneumonia – and so could not attend the funeral after all. I attended the funeral and in the afternoon returned home – but was obliged to leave George and his mother there for two weeks before he was able to ride home. It was late at night when we got home – almost frozen. Miss Sallie Evans, my wife’s sister, accompanied me to take charge of the family and do the work, until mother and George could come home. When we arrived home we found out little daughter Sallie had taken sick on

⁸ This building in Paddletown, just northeast of Newberrytown, was dedicated in February 1874 and is now the sanctuary of the St. Paul’s UMC complex.

⁹ Jacob and Margaret Mergenthaler are buried in the Salem Evangelical Cemetery on East Camping Area Road, southeast of Rossville PA. The church there had been a preaching place for Dietterich – it was erected in 1849 and razed in 1927 so that the materials could be used in the construction of the Evangelical church at Mount Royal. The Mergenthaler house, which was also a preaching appointment for Dietterich was 1 mile north of Wellsville on Ridge Road, just east of its intersection with Yeager Road.

¹⁰ John Kline (1808-1873) died February 7 and is buried at the Emmanuel Cemetery – as are his first wife Mary Wolf (1811-1862) and his second wife Matilda Krone (1808-1894).

Saturday night, just like George, with pneumonia – and was also quite bad. But in a few weeks both were restored to health, and the family again united by God's blessing.

On this charge I became very intimate with Rev. Schaeffer¹¹ of the Lutheran Church, also resident in Kingston. I preached a sermon in his church on Thanksgiving Day, when a union service was held. He and I also conducted a union prayer meeting in the different churches during the week of prayer. We also held temperance meetings and made temperance speeches together in the interests of local option – which ran very high at that time, and was adopted at the following election for one year. Brother Schaeffer, like myself, was a very strong temperance man.

The year passed very pleasantly on the charge, with the exception of the trouble occasioned by the parsonage debt. I preached nine funeral sermons on the circuit, and one hundred and eighty-nine sermons in all. I closed my work for the year and left for conference.

¹¹ George Francis Schaeffer (1830-1916) served St. Stephen Lutheran Church in New Kingston from April 1, 1871 to August 1, 1873. Because he served in different synods and different states, and because of the variant spellings of his surname, his complete service record does not appear in any one document. The St. Stephen church history, for example, lists him only as G.F. Sheaffer. The Chronicle, therefore, will sketch in order the interesting and relevant portions of his ministry. He was born in West Virginia. After apprenticing as a saddler and school teacher for a while in western Pennsylvania, he felt called to the ministry. He graduated from Pennsylvania [Gettysburg] College in 1857, taught at Lutherville Seminary (MD) and Mt. Pleasant Seminary (NC), returned to Pennsylvania to be a school principal in Somerset, and was ordained in 1863. Locally, he served New Bloomfield-Newport 1866-68, Newport 1868-71, and New Kingston 1871-73. He returned to western Pennsylvania and served Apollo 1876-82, after which he returned to the South to serve as president of North Carolina College in Mt. Pleasant 1882-85. He then retired in the South and tended a small farm until his death. He is buried in Spartanburg SC.