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CHURCH ACTIVITIES
of
FARM WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

From the Viewpoint of the Part the
Farm Women Play in Establishing
the Economic Status of Their Families
by Their Standards of Management
as Found in Five Selected Localities
in Oklahoma

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SYNOPSIS OF BULLETIN

1. The larger number of contacts made, the broader vision a people will have and the more tolerant a people will be.
2. The church may offer opportunity for contacts for all ages of farm people almost more than any one agency. (pp. 5-6).
3. Five localities in different parts of Oklahoma were studied. The localities were conspicuous for rather different agricultural interests and types of settlers. Approximately one hundred interviews in each county were made. Results discovered seemed to justify a diagnosis of conditions in each group. (pp. 6-7).
4. Of the 520 farm women interviewed, 80.6 per cent claimed church membership. (pp. 7-8).
5. Of the 496 farm operators, husbands of the above mentioned women, 60.7 per cent were church members. (p. 8).
6. A very close correlation was found between the church membership of both husband and wife and the stability of land tenure. (pp. 8-10).
7. Of 461 women answering, 29.1 per cent attended church in the home community, interpreted as open country church or single service center. (p. 10).
8. Of 467 women replying, 52.2 per cent attended church in a nearby town. With few exceptions these towns class as villages. (p. 10).
9. 17.6 per cent of the 267 women did not go to church at all. (p. 10).
10. Of 352 women reporting, 52.3 per cent attended church reasonably regularly. (pp. 10-11).
11. Those who went to church in a nearby town attended more regularly than those going to church in the open country. (p. 11).
12. Of 398 women interviewed, 51.2 per cent went to Sunday School. This relatively large per cent may be accounted for by the fact that Sunday School is a more frequent service in the open country churches than any other service. (p. 11).
13. 32.1 per cent of 368 women were receiving contacts from church organizations other than Sunday School and the regular preaching services. (p. 12).
14. Children in 70.8 per cent of 387 families make at least occasional contacts from attendance at Sunday School. 22.4 per cent of these families had no children of Sunday School age. (p. 12).
15. Of 111 families having children who were of age to benefit from church organizations other than Sunday School and preaching services, 46.8 per cent were represented by some attendance at these meetings. (p. 12).

16. Regularity of church attendance may be influenced by the ease of transportation in the several communities. 18.6 per cent of a group of 531 families did not own cars. 47.6 per cent of the farm women (heads of families) who owned cars could not drive them. There is greater independence in going from place to place where the women can drive their own cars. (p. 13).

17. Interesting stories were told of the status of various open country churches which reveal much human psychology and which account for much of the lack of contacts made by farm people through the agency of the church. (pp. 13-14).

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

In Relation to the Part Which the Farm Woman Plays in Establishing the Economic Status of Her Family by Her Standards of Management.

CHURCH LIFE—OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL CONTACTS

The church activities of the farm women of Oklahoma are considered for the reason that they may throw some light on the contacts which these women make. Although we do not wish to limit the consideration of church membership and attendance to the sociological and economic phases, nevertheless that side of the question is one uppermost for discussion in this article.

Church attendance in rural communities has especial social significance in that it offers the occasion for contacts for women almost more than any one other agency. Although religion in the past, and particularly in rural communities, has been of a highly individualistic type, yet the church teaches the brotherhood of man and is no doubt the institution which has given almost the first lessons in cooperation that many have received. Regardless of how much cooperation there may be, without doubt, opportunity for contacts are given which may have both a conscious and unconscious influence. Even by the mere going to church for worship alone, it is hardly possible to shut one's eyes to other things. It would be an unusual church group indeed, particularly a rural community, if there was no exchange of ideas before and after the service. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and material things very much occupy the ordinary group. One can hardly imagine a group which did not exchange remarks about the health of themselves and that of their families. The very greeting "How are you" suggests that. Their respective ailments are discussed as are also the remedies used. The other members of the group proffer their suggestions. These remarks may be ever so casual but thoughts are dropped which widen the experience of the listening group.

Women see how other women and their families are dressed; unconsciously, perhaps, they are planning to adapt the clothing of members of their families to a form more in accord with the mode as expressed by the group. Mary Smith is wearing a garment that has not been on display before and it comes in for approval and discussion and Mary for congratulation. Mrs. Goodheart is receiving some ideas for adaptation in a dress for her Mary and she gives voice to them. Mrs. Thrift probably remains silent, but nevertheless she is mentally calculating how she may remodel an old garment of Sue's for the younger Jenny in the light of the conversation on the church steps. It may suggest to Mrs. Openmind what she heard the Home Demonstration Agent discuss at club last Tuesday; she adds the contribution and Mrs. Friendly's cousin, who visited her from the next county, had tried it out to her entire satisfaction, which report was offered, and so on—an endless chain of contacts. The preacher may be invited to dinner and it may be the occasion for several of the neighbors to take dinner with the pastor's host and hostess, and the chain of contacts lengthens for the women. The geranium slips are growing; the vine transplanted from the woods is lending a shade to that west window; the hostess has some new curtains; she sets her table

in an attractive manner; there are comments on the food; recipes are exchanged. The preacher from another center brings his contribution. After dinner the dishes are washed. The hostess' kitchen may be arranged in a way more convenient than that of the guest, Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith had never thought of that before, but when she goes home she probably does not copy the arrangement of Mrs. Goodheart's kitchen, but adapts it to her own needs. Both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Goodheart have the visit to think over during the following week. The monotony is broken for both. Furthermore, when Mrs. Neighbor stops at Mrs. Smith's gate in the car while her husband returns a tool he had borrowed, Mrs. Smith passes on some of the results of her contacts with Mrs. Goodheart, and so Mrs. Neighbor is a beneficiary, so to speak. All this began on the church step, you remember.

Let us suppose that it is a rural church step, but suppose Mrs. Smith goes to town to church. Here, she, with the inferiority complex which troubles most of us, sees people of another type, often a type for which she has an exaggerated respect. She sees another type of church; she sees town homes; she overhears conversations of a different kind; she offers her contribution to acquaintances and receives theirs; she passes the stores with their window displays; she goes home with thoughts which change the channel of her possible humdrum mental activity.

Church attendance leads to the influences of the Ladies' Aid Society, the Missionary Society, Bible Study Clubs. Associations here lead to invitations for other social contacts with their accompanying widening of woman's outlook.

The woman who is benefiting by these opportunities unconsciously leads her children, and frequently a husband, toward an ever widening horizon. It may be that the children get these opportunities first through the influence of the Sunday School or the young people's society, and they bring the world to their mothers. At any rate, the woman is a factor inasmuch as she offers the opportunity, or fosters the interest, or makes it possible for the children to take advantage of what the church has to offer. So, in a consideration of the farm woman's part in establishing the economic status of the family by her standards of management, we feel that it would not be complete without a study of her relationship and that of her family, with the church.

LOCALITIES STUDIED

In the study made up to this time, five hundred twenty women in farm homes in five counties, viz: Garfield, Kiowa, Tillman, Jackson and Carter counties, responded to at least some of the questions relating to their church activities. Obviously, in talking to so many women, it would be impossible to receive a satisfactory answer to every question. Sometimes time forbids, or tact suggests discussing another subject, and occasionally, according to the relative value of the question with another, the question is overlooked. Approximately one hundred women in each county made reports. An effort was made to make the sample in each county representative. Three locali-

ties, each embracing an area about three miles square, in each county were chosen, representing the districts of greatest prosperity, least prosperity, and where conditions were average. In some instances the topography of the land made it necessary to deviate from the square. In those cases an effort was made to consult families on side roads as well as the highways. An effort was made to keep at sufficient distance from a large town or a county seat so that the sample would represent open country conditions.

Garfield county is located somewhat north and west of central Oklahoma. It is part of the Cherokee Strip and has been open to settlement since 1893. Agriculturally, it is located in Oklahoma's great wheat region. Oil is an appreciable interest of many of the farmers, but except in the Covington-Garber region the county is not given over to that enterprise.

Kiowa, Tillman and Jackson counties are located in the southwestern part of the state. It was opened to settlement some ten years later than Garfield county. Although these counties make a large group from one section of the state and were canvassed for a purpose to be discussed in another circular, conditions in the counties are not as similar as their contiguous locality would suggest. These conditions, with their analysis, will be discussed in another circular. Cotton seems to be the principal agricultural interest of Jackson and Tillman counties. Kiowa county practices diversification to a larger extent.

Carter county is located in the southern part of the state and is part of the old Indian Territory. The land here over a large part of the county is so broken that in many places it approaches the mountainous. Another section of the county is given over to oil production. Cotton and gardening seem to be the main agricultural interests.

In general, Garfield county may be said to be made up largely of people who have lived in the northern states, with Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Iowa (in order of number) furnishing most of the settlers of the county. Texas, Missouri and Arkansas are more largely represented in Kiowa county: Texas, Alabama, Arkansas in Tillman county: Texas, Alabama and Tennessee in Jackson county, while Texas and Arkansas have furnished the greatest influences for those interviewed from Carter county. Due to the fact that Carter county is in the old Indian Territory, a slightly larger per cent have always lived in the part now known as Oklahoma.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP OF FARM WOMEN

In the study made up to this time five hundred twenty women in farm homes in these counties were questioned on church membership. Approximately one hundred women in each county responded. It has been found that 80.6% of the whole number claimed church membership in some church. Tillman county reported the highest per cent, 84.8 per cent, while Carter county ranked lowest with 75.7 per cent. Garfield, Kiowa, and Jackson counties ranked very close together with 81.9 per cent, 80.7 per cent and 80 per cent of the home-makers, respectively, claiming church membership.

From an inspection of these figures it seems that the averages, viz., the arithmetic average, the mode and the median would be very close together.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP OF FARM OPERATORS

The question "Is your husband a member of the church?" was asked. As is usual in other statistical records, we found fewer men members of the church. 60.7 per cent of the farm operators, husbands of the 496 women who answered these questions, were members of a church. Again Tillman county led with 65.7 per cent of the 99 reported upon; followed closely by Garfield county with 65.1 per cent of the 86 who replied. Again Carter county reported the lowest membership—55.6 per cent of the 99 reporting claimed church membership. Kiowa county and Jackson county showed that 57.3 per cent and 60.8 per cent, respectively, of the men reported upon, as church members. These figures are given to show that at one time at least these people received contacts that would present themselves by virtue of their church membership.

DIVIDED HOUSEHOLDS ON BASIS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A check was made on the number of families where the wife was a member and the husband was not, which showed 22.2 per cent of the whole number of families (490) in which there was this one sided affiliation. Kiowa county showed the highest number in this class, viz., 25.5 per cent; closely followed by Garfield with 24.7 per cent. Tillman county, the lowest, with 18.8 per cent, with Jackson and Carter with 22 per cent and 20.2 per cent, respectively, in middle ground.

In the count of the membership of husband, with the wife a non-member, Garfield county leads the list with 3.5 per cent; Jackson with 3 per cent ranks next; Tillman county ranks lowest with 1.1 per cent; with Carter and Kiowa counties showing 2 per cent and 2.7 percent, respectively.

BOTH HUSBAND AND WIFE MEMBERS

A rather significant set of figures is that representing the homes where both the operator and his wife are, or have been, church members, and where there is more likely to be cooperation in such matters. Here there is a showing that 58.8 per cent of the 490 homes interviewed reported both husband and wife as church members. Tillman county again stands highest with 62.5 per cent of the family heads belonging to a church; with Garfield county with almost as good a record, viz., 62.4 per cent. Jackson, Kiowa and Carter counties ranking next in order, respectively, 59 per cent, 54.5 per cent, and 53.5 per cent.

NEITHER HUSBAND NOR WIFE MEMBERS

Of the 490 families reported upon, 16.5 per cent showed that neither husband nor wife claimed church membership. The counties ranked in order:

Carter 24.2 per cent, Kiowa county 17.3 per cent, Jackson 16 per cent, Tillman 14.6 per cent, and Garfield 9.4 per cent.

RELATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND LAND TENURE

An interesting relation between church membership and land tenure was revealed. Of the 239 families interviewed who owned their farms, 67.8 per cent of them were those where both husband and wife were members of a church. Of the 235 families who rented their farms 51.1 per cent of them were those where both husband and wife were church members. The laborers interviewed make only a small sample, viz., 16 families. Both husband and wife of 37.5 per cent of the families were church members. From these figures it would seem that a more stable tenure is accompanied by the higher per cent of church membership of both husband and wife.

Nor is this result found only in examination of the large group taken as a whole—490 families in all—living in the widely scattered communities. The records of the interviews made in each county were kept separate. Even in these smaller groups the same relationship obtains. In Garfield county 53 families owned their farms; 66 per cent of these families were those in which both husband and wife were church members. In 56.3 per cent of the families who were renters both husband and wife had church affiliations. The group from Kiowa county showed that husbands and wives of 60.4 per cent of the owner families, and 51.8 per cent of the renter families were church members; from Tillman county 71.7 per cent of the owner families, and 59 per cent of the renter families; from Jackson county 73.2 per cent of the owner families, and 49.1 per cent of the renter families; from Carter county 68.2 per cent of the owner families and 43.4 per cent of the renter families.

From the opposite viewpoint, that where neither husband nor wife have church affiliations, the percentage is higher when considering the renter families than the owner families; for example, in 9.6 per cent of the 239 owner families of the whole group neither husband nor wife were members, and in 23.8 per cent of the 235 renter families neither husband nor wife held definite relation to the church.

In each of the smaller groups taken separately the same inverse relation was noted, except in one county where the percentage was the same.*

Each of the examples seem to give added proof to a conclusion that church affiliations of both husband and wife seem to accompany a more stable economic life. Whether the attitude of mind which makes for religious zeal is concomitant with that which contributes towards thrift and accumulation, or whether the stability of tenure and a settled home life leads towards definite relationships to the church, is something for further investigation of the religionist and the economist. The fact of a relationship seems to be evident from the study of these examples and a study of the whole group.

Figures for the status of tenure when the wife is a member and the husband is not, or when the husband is a member and the wife is not, may be

*This material in tabular form may be obtained from this office.

obtained at this office but they do not follow a definite trend as do those bearing on the relationship of both husband and wife. It would seem that larger samples might reveal something definite and interesting.

WHERE THE FARM WOMEN GO TO CHURCH

The question of where farm people go to church was taken up—whether in the open country or the nearby town. In Garfield county, with the exception of Enid, a town of 16,576 inhabitants, the communities list as villages. In Kiowa county the largest town is Hobart; in Tillman county the county seat, Frederick; in Jackson county, Altus and in Carter county, Ardmore. The schedules were taken at a distance from these towns so that they do not enter materially into contacts made by church affiliation. The other communities which list under the heading "Nearby town" are Waukomis, Carrier, Douglas and Marshall; Roosevelt, Sentinel, and Snyder; Tipton, Manitou; Olustee, Duke, Eldorado, Martha and Blair, only one of which, viz., Snyder, has over 1000 inhabitants.*

ATTENDANCE IN HOME COMMUNITY

The question "Do you attend church in your own community?"* was answered by 461 women. Of this group 29.1 per cent answered in the affirmative. The relative number for the smaller groups taken separately, viz., Garfield, Kiowa, Tillman, Jackson and Carter counties, ranged very close to the average, respectively, 31.9 per cent, 30.5 per cent, 30 per cent, 23.1 per cent and 29.8 per cent.

ATTENDANCE IN NEARBY TOWN

To the alternative question, "Do you attend church in a nearby town?" 52.2 per cent of the whole responded that they did, with the smaller groups; Garfield, Kiowa, Tillman, Jackson and Carter counties, reporting 64.8 per cent, 45.3 per cent, 50.6 per cent, 57.1 per cent, and 43.6 per cent, respectively. From these figures it would seem that Garfield holds first place for church attendance in both places.

NO ATTENDANCE

Only 3.3 per cent of those reporting from the Garfield county group did not attend church at all. In Kiowa county 27.4 per cent do not attend church; in Tillman county 21.3 per cent; in Jackson county 13.1 per cent, and in Carter county 22.3 per cent.

REGULARITY OF ATTENDANCE

Regularity of attendance was reported upon by 352 farm women of whom 52.3 per cent reported that they attended church regularly. Again Garfield county stands at the top with 71.4 per cent reporting regular attend-

*Gazetter of Oklahoma, Census 1920.

*This has reference to open country or the single-service church community.

ance; Tillman county next with 61.9 per cent; Jackson county third with 57.4 per cent. Kiowa county occupies middle ground with 45 per cent, with Carter county showing the least regularity of church attendance, that of 30.2 per cent.

RELATION OF REGULAR ATTENDANCE TO THE LOCATION
OF THE CHURCH, VIZ., THE HOME COMMUNITY
AND THE NEARBY TOWN

The next thought we may have is whether there is any greater regularity of attendance by those who make a practice of going to church in their home community and those who attend church in the nearby town. The material was tabulated on this basis and it was found that 66.3 per cent of all those going to church in their own community attended regularly, while 72.4 per cent of all those who attended church in the nearby town were in regular attendance.

A little doubt exists in the mind of the leader as to the interpretation of the phrase "regular attendance." An effort was made by the field workers to impress upon those interviewed that "regular attendance" was meant "regular" in relation to the number of services held. It seems just possible that some people kept to the idea that "regularly" meant every Sunday, and since most open country churches hold services less often, there may be a slight discrepancy. On the other hand, when services are held less often, or at irregular intervals, there is a tendency for people to take less interest, resulting in less regular attendance.

Not only was there a more regular attendance by those attending the nearby town churches when considering the large sample as a whole, but also in all the smaller groups, save one—the Carter county group—taken separately the same relationship was found. The Carter county group showed a slightly higher per cent in favor of attendance in the home community.

ATTENDANCE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School attendance was discussed with 398 women who responded to our inquiries. Of the whole group 51.2 per cent, or slightly over half of the women, attended Sunday School. Here again Garfield county leads in Sunday School attendance with 70.5 per cent of the women reporting. The Jackson county group follows with 64.7 per cent, and Tillman with 54.7 per cent. The Carter county group shows the lowest per cent of Sunday School attendance, with 26 per cent, and Kiowa next lowest with 45 per cent.

It might be thought by some that church attendance ran lower in some places, due to non-existence of open-country churches, and the distance and inconvenience of town churches. However, in many communities where there are no corporate church organizations, there are Sunday Schools. However, the relative position of the groups in attendance at Sunday School is practically the same as in attention to other church activities.

OTHER CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The church organizations which give most social contacts are those in which the women meet for a longer time, and which have the avowedly double purpose, the spiritual and social, such as the Ladies' Aid Society or Missionary Society.

Of 368 women who answered regarding attendance or membership in one of these societies, only 88 responded in the affirmative. Here again Garfield county leads with 35 women receiving contacts from these organizations, and the Carter county group shows the fewest number, two belonging or attending. Groups from Kiowa, Tillman and Jackson counties show 19, 20, and 12 women, respectively. Other organizations listed were Bible Study groups, Christian Endeavor, Epworth League, Baptist Young Peoples' Union, Wowan's Christian Temperance Union, Charity Circle, and Singing. From the attendance of all these other organizations, including the Ladies' Aid Society and the Missionary Societies, only 118 women of the 368 women responding to our inquiry, or 32.1 per cent of the group, were securing the broader acquaintanceship and vision which such organizations afford.

ATTENDANCE OF CHILDREN AT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The women who responded to questions regarding the attendance of their children at Sunday School were 499. In 112 of these families, or 22.4 per cent of them, there were no children, or the children were too small for Sunday School. "Too young" is a term applied to children under school age. It is thought that at school age it is reasonable to expect children to be able to go to Sunday School unattended, if there is a Sunday School in the home community.

The children in 70.8 per cent of the homes attended Sunday School reasonably regularly. Here again the Garfield county group leads with 92.2 per cent of the homes represented by children in Sunday School. Again the Carter county group shows the poorest representation, with 55.4 per cent. The middle ground is represented by the Kiowa county, the Jackson county and the Tillman county groups, with 74.2 per cent, 74.1 per cent, and 65.5 per cent, respectively.

The figures for the attendance of the children upon church services other than the Sunday School and the preaching service were limited to those received from 111 families. Many families did not have children of the age for these organizations. Children representing 46.8 per cent of these families were receiving contacts from such organizations as the Christian Endeavor, Junior Endeavor, Epworth League, Baptist Young People's Union, and Singing groups. In the Carter county group only 1 family was represented by children attending these organizations; in the Jackson county group only 3 were receiving benefit and training from these organizations of the church. The samples from the individual groups are too small to be representative, but they may be considered rather significant.

SIGNIFICANT REPORTS FROM FIELD WORKERS

The purpose of this circular, as set down at the beginning, is to show the number of people belonging to farm families who are receiving benefit of the widened experience which the church affords.

This paper does not pretend to analyze the reasons for these conditions or to set forth plans for remedial measures.

Some other data which we have may throw some light on the subject, however. When talking with many people the general idea frequently expressed is that all farmers have a car of some kind. We anticipated this expression, and asked 531 women, representing as many families, concerning car ownership. 18.6 per cent of this number replied in the negative. The Carter county group, which has ranked lowest in opportunities for contacts afforded by church activities, ranks lowest also in car ownership—39.6 per cent of the 106 families did not own a car. On the other hand, the Garfield county group, which has ranked highest in attention to most of the church enterprises, shows the highest percentage of car ownership. All the families but 8.3 per cent own cars. The Tillman, Kiowa, and Jackson county groups show that 18.1 per cent, 15.9 per cent, and 10.8 per cent of the families interviewed have only the slower means of traveling from place to place. Several families were found who had no means of travel other than that afforded by the courtesy of neighbors.

Again, it was found that in homes where cars were owned the women were helpless in using them. Two hundred ninety seven women in families where cars were owned replied to the question in regard to their ability to drive, and only 43.4 per cent of them were independent of other members of the family when they wished to go beyond walking distance. But you may say that seldom is the work of the farm so pressing that someone could not find time to drive the car for the women. We asked the following question, "Do you and your daughters have the use of your car when you wish it?" Three hundred fifty nine answered this question, and the result was that 30.9 per cent of these women could not have the use of the car at all times.

Some interesting material was related to the field workers in Kiowa county. One neighborhood which was canvassed is grouped around a rather attractive rural church. At one time its activities were very flourishing, but due to some misunderstanding as to where denominational jurisdiction rested, services were partially discontinued until they became quite irregular. At present conditions seem to be improving. Sunday School is held every Sunday and there are preaching services twice a month. The Ladies' Aid Society meets twice a month, unless they are called together in addition to their regular meeting time for more specific work. At the time of the gathering of the material the field workers were hindered one day by finding none of the women of the neighborhood at home. It was discovered later that the women had assembled at one home to make clothing for a family who had lost their possessions by fire. Neighborly acts of like kind are frequent in

that community. It was said at the county seat that in the history of the county there had never been a misdemeanor on the court record from that neighborhood.*

Another neighborhood in that same county was not so fortunate in its church life. Efforts were made from time to time to conduct a Sunday School and to hold preaching services. At the time of the survey (May, 1926) the Sunday School was to be reorganized the following Sunday. It had been disbanded during the preceding winter. There were no regular preaching services.

It was reported that a certain denomination "tried to run everything." The more conservative minded reported that there were too many denominations represented in the group; no one group had a strong leader; consequently, the community could not be joined together by their common ties. A little village not far away held preaching services occasionally. The minister came from "somewhere." It was reported that the nearest place where regular services were held was a town twenty-two miles away.

The most encouraging feature of that community in regard to religious activity was the fact that a singing was held at the school house every Sunday night. The field workers were told that "everyone went," "Our car never misses a Sunday night," and the like. Just how much of a religious service this is could not be discovered, but whatever its specific nature, it seemed a big stride toward unity for that community.

An interesting example of "over-churching" in Tillman county was given to the field workers. About six miles northwest of Frederick, between that town and Tipton, is located a Missionary Baptist church known as Bethel. The church membership was given as about 100; Sunday School enrollment 180, with average attendance of 125. There was a Woman's Missionary Society with 20 active members; a Baptist Young People's Union with 25 seniors, 18 intermediates, and 35 adults. The Bible class had an average attendance of 35; the Sunbeam Band about 25. Two rooms were being added to the church. There is a bungalow of four rooms for the use of the full time pastor.

About two miles from Bethel is a Methodist church where preaching service occurs once a month. There is a small Sunday School which was reported as weak and struggling.

*This is an unofficial statement. It was not verified by this office by reference to court records.

