

FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
NASHVILLE

One Hundred Years of Service

The Centenary<sup>4</sup>  
OF  
The First Presbyterian Church  
OF  
Nashville, Tennessee



THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE.  
The Corner Stone Was Laid April 28, 1849, and the Building Dedicated on  
Easter Sunday, April 20, 1851.

# THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The Addresses Delivered in Connection  
with the Observance of the  
One Hundredth Anniversary,  
November 8-15, 1914.



1915  
Foster & Parkes Company  
Nashville, Tenn.



## CHAPTER VI.

---

### PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF MY NASHVILLE PASTORATE.

By REV. WILLIAM M. ANDERSON, D.D.

My friends, it is with deep and commingled emotions that I stand before you tonight on this platform of one of the historic churches of North America. I am standing in the capital city of my native State. My mother, my father and my wife are all native Tennesseans. Three of my seven sons were born in Tennessee.

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said  
This is my own, my native land.”

My father graduated here about sixty years ago, with the degree of A.M. from the old University of Nashville, presided over by that princely and distinguished scholar Dr. Philip Lindsley. I gave nine of the best years of my life to the pastorate of this church. My sixth son died during my pastorate here. My seventh son was born here at the manse at the rear of the church. I repeat my opening sentence, that I appear before you tonight with deep and commingled emotions.

I hope you realize that I confront a very difficult, delicate duty. If I say too much I will be accused of bragging; if I say too little you may conclude I did nothing during my nine years' stay in this city. I therefore ask your patient, kindly attention while I recount some of the reminiscences of my work.

1. I think it will be in order first to give some of the facts taken from my private register. While your pastor I delivered 1,920 sermons, lectures and addresses; the session received 1,130 members; I performed 336 baptisms, officiated at 453 marriages and held 387 funerals. During that time the church expended an estimated amount of \$175,000. I sincerely hope that more was accomplished than is indicated by these figures. They seem small as we look at them, but by the time a pastor wades through the work involving the amount of service indicated by these figures he, at least, is conscious of having been reasonably busy all the while.

2. I think you will be interested in some comments on the special epochs in the religious work of the congregation and of the city during this time.

The greatest event that happened during my experience here was the Student Volunteer Convention. At this time 4,188 delegates from the 700 schools, colleges and universities of the United States and Canada met in their first great convention in the South. I served as Chairman of the Ministers' Committee and also as Chairman of the Ladies' Entertainment Committee. I worked as best I knew how for more than three months preparatory to this convention. The city of Nashville has a right to be proud of its accomplishments during this time. We were asked to entertain, on the Harvard plan, 3,000 delegates. Five days before the convention we were able to wire the New York office that we had homes requested for the 3,000. They did us the compliment of immediately wiring us to secure homes for 1,000 more. It was no little task to get this city to see and realize the vision and entertain the 4,188 delegates as indicated above. It took a combination of every sort of plan to attain this end. For example, the woman's committee would meet, with myself as Chairman and Mr. Southam, the Executive Secretary from the New York

office, present. The roll would be called and reports given as to the progress being made in securing homes. The name of some church would be called, and a timid little woman would rise and say, "Dr. Anderson, you asked our church to entertain twenty-five, and we have been able to secure homes for only nineteen." I would then say, "All you ladies turn and look at this lady. Don't you think she could get twenty-five homes if she would try?" They would all say they thought so, and I would then ask her if she didn't think it best to try again, and she would answer, "I'll do my best again." This scene was repeated many, many times, with the successful results, as above stated. One lady of the McKendree Church met me on the street and said, "Dr. Anderson, is your committee crazy? The idea of asking our church to entertain 250!" I answered, "My dear friend, be very humble and patient or we may ask you to entertain 350." This First Presbyterian Church actually entertained more than 400 delegates. That convention was a sight worth seeing. Frequently during its sessions I have seen this entire Fifth Avenue crowded from fence to fence with eager young people, hurrying from Church Street to the Ryman Auditorium. Just before the convention I secured from the Chief of Police the privilege of saying to the different squads of policemen, as opportunity offered, a few words as to what they could do to help make the convention a success. I tried to inspire them by telling them of the courtesy and full information given by the London police. And after the convention was closed and the delegates gone, a number of the policemen commented to me favorably upon the high character of the delegates and their good humor and the uniform good order.

Another special epoch was the Torrey-Alexander meeting, which continued for a month. The Pastors' Association of the city appointed a committee of nine, naming



myself as Chairman, to interview Dr. Torrey, then in Atlanta, regarding his coming. I went down and told my beloved friend, Mr. John W. Thomas, Jr., of our appointment, and that I, with authority, had named him also a member of the committee, and that I desired that he take his private car and convey the committee to Atlanta and accomplish the purpose of its appointment. He laughingly declined the appointment, but touched a button that brought in Mr. Robert Saunders, his chief clerk, and said, "Bob, give Dr. Anderson anything he wants." I received a round-trip pass for the entire committee to Atlanta and return. Dr. Torrey and his helpers came and a great work was accomplished. Many of you will remember how Dr. Torrey spoke to great crowds of men every day at noon for two weeks at this church with marked effect.

When Dr. George W. Truett, of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, held a meeting in this city, he spoke every day at noon in this church. Great crowds of men came to hear him and were deeply moved by his earnest eloquence. Dr. John Balcom Shaw, then of Chicago, now of Los Angeles, held a meeting in East Nashville and spoke with tremendous power to great congregations of men at the noon hour in this church.

3. I can hope to give only a few of my experiences while here. During that time I formed some of the warmest friendships of my life, which will continue into eternity. While here I performed many happy marriages and was always glad to make happy people happier by this event. Many times I was greatly saddened by the death of beloved friends. Out of the 387 funerals which I held, 84 were past 70 years of age; of this number 30 were past 80 years of age; of these 2 were past 90 years of age.

My experience with relation to my officers was right remarkable. When I came I found 16 elders and 14 deacons in active service. During my stay 5 additional elders



and 12 additional deacons were elected. Of this number only two died during my pastorate—Deacons John Hill Eakin and John C. Kennedy. Both were very valuable and efficient men.

While here I conducted many services of many different kinds. On one Sunday I took part in eight services, but I do not care to repeat that experience, as I was a little tired that night. I sought to render all sorts of service to reach and influence the various forces of this city and draw some of them to attend our church, with what effect some of you will remember.

When I came here the St. Andrews Church for the colored people was worshiping in a little rented room on the corner of Gay and Spruce Streets. Mrs. Sarah Bradford, the mother of the Hon. J. C. Bradford, was deeply interested in this work, and although I was not on the Committee of the Colored Evangelism, she kept me going until the present property of the church was the outcome. Many of you will remember the noble work of the Woman's Guild of this church, how it conducted many "garbage sales" and used any and every legitimate device to get money to help this congregation. My heart was deeply interested in Rev. Spencer Jackson, who has nobly worked among the colored people of this city.

I had many very interesting experiences in personal work which I would like to relate to you, but they are too sacred to be mentioned. If I should tell much about them some of you, at least, would recognize who they are. I have used them with marked effect at other places when recounting my experiences.

While here I purposed to preach the whole gospel and endeavored to present the great doctrines of our church, clothed in the form of practical evangelism. I did not try to hold up before you a skeleton showing only the bones, but life's actual ideals of truth as revealed in the life and teachings of Christ.

4. My most marked experience during my stay in Nashville was my dreadful illness, which occurred December 21, 1907. Some of you will doubtless remember it. It was the greatest sorrow that ever came to my family and the greatest blessing that ever came into my life. My devoted mother and wife looked, as they thought, for the last time on my face alive, but through the providence of God and the help of Drs. Buckner, Bailey, Witherspoon and Wood, the help of the nurses and the prayers of more friends than I thought I ever had, my life was spared and I am still at work. Permit me to outline two events that happened at that time. Through your kindness my wife and I were sent to Florida for an indefinite stay. After three weeks she returned and I remained two months.<sup>4</sup> Shortly after my return one day on the street a Jewish lady stopped me and took my hand and said, "Oh, Dr. Anderson, I am so glad to see you back and yourself again. If ever we Jews prayed for anybody, we prayed for you." A little later when the State Fair of the colored people was being started, I called Mr. Joseph H. Thompson and suggested that he and I go out and visit the fair to encourage its promoters. We went and were most graciously received. When we were shown through the various departments and came to the woman's building, the colored woman who had charge of it recognized us both and called our names, and then said to me, "Oh, Dr. Anderson, I am so glad you are well again! If ever we colored people prayed for anybody, we prayed for you." These two experiences greatly humbled and at the same time encouraged me. A few weeks ago in Dallas a traveling man came up and said, "I want to shake your hand, for the last time that I was in your church at Nashville was the Sunday that they thought you were dying, and the service seemed like a funeral." I want to bear testimony tonight to my gratitude to God for this experience.

There are some peculiar incidents connected with my pastorate here that will be worth while to note. It was my second time to succeed Dr. Jere Witherspoon, with one man coming between us. When he left Jackson, Tenn., Dr. Nall followed him for seven years, and then I was called. When he left this church Dr. Vance followed him for five years, and then I was called.

When I came to be your pastor I was pleased to find here as one of your deacons Dr. William Bailey, a college friend. I had received courtesies from some of your officers, Mr. Throne, Mr. Raymond, Dr. Blanton and Dr. Plunket and others, and had been associated most pleasantly in Y. M. C. A. conventions with Mr. Harry A. Myers.

I was glad to become the pastor of my greatly admired friend, Mrs. Gates P. Thruston, and hear her sing. As a college boy I sat in the back seat of this auditorium one night when every seat was taken and heard her sing "Only an Armor Bearer," at a great Y. M. C. A. rally. Being a lover of music I enjoyed her singing, which seemed a reproducing of Neilson's great voice.

When I accepted your call I was accepting my third call to Nashville. When I finished my course of study I was asked to take charge of the Second Church. Later on I was called and thought I was going to be pastor of the Woodland Street Church, but Presbytery declined to let me come.

One especially attractive anticipated pleasure was my being associated again with my beloved friends, Dr. and Mrs. J. H. McNeilly. He had been my mother's pastor when I was 5 years old, and I was in her Sunday school class. At that early age her sweet smile left an indelible impress on my memory and I greatly enjoyed the intimacy of our association during my work here, and I lament tonight, with thousands of her friends in this city, our loss, but rejoice in her gain, in her entrance to her heavenly home.

I recognized that in the student bodies of Ward Seminary and Belmont College there were great opportunities for service. I greatly enjoyed preaching Sunday after Sunday to the splendid body of students that came from these two and other institutions.

5. This resume of experiences would not be complete if I did not recount some of the humorous incidents that happened. You will remember we had a Chinese Sunday school. You will remember one of them, Lee Bow, cut off his cue, let his hair grow and dressed like an American, and was a sort of leader among them. Mrs. Clare was for many years a devoted member of this church, also devoted to her pastor, whoever he might be. One day she met Lee Bow on the street and said, "Lee Bow, do you know our new minister?" "Yes—Yes—Yes." "Do you ever see him?" "Yes—Yes—Yes." "Does he ever come to your Sunday school?" "Yes—Yes—Yes, he come to the Sunny Skul, and b-e-a-t on de pee-anner and h-o-l-l-e-r."

One day the house was very full, the services had begun, I had just announced the first hymn, the choir had risen to sing, when an old lady cloaked in black, whom I had never seen before, and have not seen since, rose from this right hand block of pews and approached the pulpit and beckoned to me, and I came to the edge of the platform. She whispered in loud tones, "You don't preach long, do you?" I said, "No, not very long." "Never over an hour, is it?" I said, "Never over an hour, madam." And she went back and sat down.

One Sunday I saw a well-dressed woman, whom I had met elsewhere, and whom I knew to be eccentric, enter the church and sit on a chair away back by the door. I always invite strangers to come and meet me, and that morning she came and said, "I want to ask you one question. Why is this old Presbyterian Church worshipping in an Egyptian temple?" I said, "Madam, you have answered your own

question. It is a Presbyterian church and not an Egyptian temple." "It is." "It isn't." "It is." "It isn't." I said, "Madam, it was not conceived by an Egyptian architect, it was not builded by an Egyptian contractor, it is not in Egypt, it has no Egyptian members, I am not an Egyptian; therefore, it is not an Egyptian temple." She said, "Did you build it?" I said, "Oh, no, madam, it was built before I was born, and possibly before you were born." At this she became very angry, turned and hurried away.

One of the older devoted members of the church one day said to me, "We have been very fortunate in this church; we have had an unbroken line of great men as pastors. Dr. Edgar was, perhaps, the greatest man we ever had. He was a great preacher, a profound theologian and a powerful philosopher, but since he died they have been getting worse and worse," and I am not the last.

Shortly after I became pastor frequently I was greeted with this remark, "You remind us so much of Dr. Witherspoon." When Dr. and Mrs. Witherspoon came back on a visit the ladies of the church gave them a beautiful largely attended reception. Many of the older ladies kissed him in their joy at seeing their beloved ex-pastor. I approached a company of young matrons and said, "They say I remind them of Dr. Witherspoon, but they do not kiss me." One of the young matrons replied, "Please step out in the hall a moment."

6. I cannot close this already too extended talk without acknowledging my gratitude and appreciation for your kindness and goodness to me and mine while we were among you. You gave me a trip to Europe, and the benefit and experiences of that trip I would not part with for any amount of money. You gave me two trips to Florida for rest and recreation. Twice while I was with you you raised my salary, and you gave innumerable tokens of love to me and mine which we can never forget. I sin-

cerely thank you as a congregation for your help with my beloved boys. Many of you, in ways that you do not realize, contributed to their development in character. My oldest son, now a pastor in the same city where I minister, says that his work with the Christian Endeavor Society of this church did more to help him to learn to think and speak on his feet than any other single external element that came into his life. I especially desire to thank you for your great kindness to my beloved mother. She was an affectionate nature and greatly appreciated every evidence of your thoughtfulness and affection. It is so easy for those advanced in years to be forgotten, and their channels of joy cut off. And this congregation seemed never to forget my mother. And if you had never done anything else for me and mine during my stay, I would be under an everlasting debt of gratitude for your kindness to her.

I humbly apologize for consuming so much of your time, and I regret to have wearied you with so much detail, but I could talk to you for hours along these lines. I thank you most sincerely for your attention.