

## SAYS CHURCH HAS BEEN ONE OF BEGINNINGS

Spirit and vision characterize Universalist society, declares the Rev. Mr. Williams.

The Universalist Church of the Messiah observed rally day yesterday and the pastor, the Rev. L. O Williams, preached an historical sermon in which he said the church was the result of a sermon preached in June, 1816. in a barn where the Star theater afterward stood. The preacher was the Rev Stephen R. Smith, the pioneer of Universalism in Western New York. Thirty years after the Rev. Mr. Smith became regular pastor. The first church edifice was built in 1831 on Washington street, directly back of where the Ellicott Square now stands. In 1866 a new church was built where Flint & Kent's store now is on Main street, and 26 years later the society sold its Main street property and built the present church on North street at the corner of Mariner.

"Many of the pastorates," said the Rev. Mr. Williams, "were short and uneventful, but Stephen R. Smith was pastor for six years and made a distinct mark on the life of the parish as well as of the city. Dr. Hartzell was a force during the days of the Civil war and the years following. Dr. Fletcher, his successor, remained eight years honored and beloved by all who knew him. Dr. Mason stayed twelve years and is still remembered with affection. Dr. Powers was a champion of the social vision when it was less popular than it is now. Not one of the former pastors is alive at the present time.

"The church has always been church of beginnings. With a spirit and a vision rather than a creed it has always been on the firing line as the champion of some new aspect of Christian truth and service. Many of the movements for the betterment of Buffalo and some movements outside have started in the Church of the Messiah. Moreover, it has always been a church of comfort and encouragement and has multiplied itself in new ideas and new forms of service which have been adopted into our civic and religious life.

"The Women's Centenary Association of the Universalist church was organized in Buffalo. A large part of our social service for women—protective, educational and cultural—grew out of the Women's union which in turn grew out of the Literary club of the Church of the Messiah. The monument of that movement is still standing In Townsend Hall which was taken over by the university. The King's Daughters and the Flower mission were other forms of service in which the Church of the Messiah had a conspicuous part. With Dr. Powers the social vision fairly blazed in the city and his heterodoxy of 25 years ago has become the orthodoxy of today.

"During the present pastorate, the new things undertaken and done at the Church of the Messiah have set the pace for others. The illustrated

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lecture, the emphasis on psychology, the sympathy with the idealistic aspects of life, are but cases in point.

"And the Church of the Messiah is not done with this kind of work. Never indifferent to old truth, careful that nothing be obscured or lost, it still believes that the greatest service possible for a Christian church is to be a guide into new truth. To open new channels for the Spirit, to stand behind the prophets of a new day of better things, to catch the note of permanence and sufficiency in midst of change, to discount the wail of doubt and the fear of decay and loss—here is our mission for the future as it has been for the past. Of course, it is a mission for strong men and women and possibly we shall always be few in numbers, but it is a service that ranks large with God. Never in our history has there been a greater demand than at the present hour for the service which we are peculiarly fitted to give."

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