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The Social Problem of The Church in South Dakota

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**The Social Problem
of
The Church
in
South Dakota**

By
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Explanatory Note

The main purpose of this study has been to discover significant trends in the general church situation of the state. To accomplish this end and also because of lack of space, it has seemed desirable to omit reference to individual churches or to compare the work of denominations. In lieu of these alternatives the writer has attempted to picture an average of all churches, which, in most cases has been further subdivided into four groups based on location.

In some respects the net results of such an approach are unfortunate. The casual reader may get the erroneous impression that the writer is unduly critical, impersonal, and unappreciative of the church's purpose and program. This is by no means the case. It is recognized that many heroic struggles have been made by pioneer ministers, their families, and by loyal church organizations. Many inspiring stories could be told of sacrifices and unbelievable burdens which have been carried by such church groups.

While these ministers and church groups should be honored for the work they have done in the pioneering stages of a commonwealth the fact remains that we are now rapidly passing into a new situation. From now on South Dakota needs a new type of church with a redirected purpose, program, and method. The new goal calls for the rebuilding of community life based on local needs. Whereas the old church served only a fraction of the community, the new church should serve the community as a whole. The goal of personal salvation for individuals must be extended to include community salvation as well.

In suggesting a social gospel program for the rural church, the writer does not have in mind that the minister should become a "community chore boy" or a mere "discusser" of current problems. It is suggested that he with other leaders of community social institutions should work shoulder to shoulder for the planning and rebuilding of community life. The church's part in such a program will be to offer guidance in the selection of personal and community ideals, developing spiritual insight, inspiration, and moral courage. Such a program will follow only as the minister learns to have confidence in the community and the latter in turn reciprocates by seeing new possibilities in the work of the minister.

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The Social Problem of The Church in South Dakota

W. F. Kumlien

I. Introduction

The Problem.—As one studies the church situation in South Dakota, there appears at first to be a number of more or less unrelated problems which seriously interfere with the proper functioning of the church as a social institution. Some of the more obvious problems are:

1. Over-churching in most South Dakota communities. (Figure 1)
2. Denominational overlapping.² (Table 2)
3. The economic inability of the majority of South Dakota churches to meet the standard unit requirements set forth by national accrediting agencies.
4. The present lag in the church as an agency of social control.
5. The typical church's segmentary approach to community problems.
6. The lack of social planning for the future.

On closer examination, however, these seemingly separate problems emerge into clearer focus as related parts of a central unitary problem. Briefly stated, **this problem is our present lack of community socialization in South Dakota or our present lack of capacity and will to act together in community life.**

Because of the diverse origins of South Dakota's population, and the relatively recent settlement of the state, communities have not yet learned to act and plan together for the common good. "In-groups" or cliques, too frequently operate as aggressive minorities and attempt to control community life to their own ends, or else go to the other extreme and largely withdraw from active participation in community life. Because of the close association between nationality groups and denominational affiliations, the church has too often tended to accentuate and widen divisions in the community rather than help to bridge them.

Only recently have South Dakotans begun to study seriously the assets and liabilities of their local environment and to adjust themselves accordingly. It is hoped that out of this analysis-adjustment process will come a new appreciation of local community needs as well as effective ways and means of meeting them.

1. This study was first projected in 1925 as part of a series of investigations on rural social institutions in South Dakota in cooperation with Dr. C. J. Galpin, of the Section on Rural Life Studies, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. D. A. This bulletin is fourth in the series, the first having been published in 1928, as "Equalizing Library Opportunities in South Dakota," the second in 1930, as "High School Education of Farm Boys and Girls in South Dakota," and the third in 1931, as "The Rural Health Situation in South Dakota."

2. See Table 2, p. 12.

The Viewpoint.—1. The main objective of this study has been to note trends in the church situation and to interpret their social significance rather than to take a religious census of the state.³

2. It is assumed throughout that the Christian church is a social institution and as such, fits into the framework of social theory in the same way as any other social institution. As such, the church is not an end in itself, but in the final analysis is responsible to society for financial support, social approval and social sanction.

3. In attempting to evaluate the manner in which the church is functioning in South Dakota, we have tried to keep in mind the local environment, the basic needs of the community, and the church's relationship to other institutions and agencies in the community.

4. A purely objective attitude has been taken toward the relative values of doctrinal beliefs maintained by the various denominations operating in the state. Our purpose in this study is to note only their social effects on community life.

5. It is assumed that the church, as a social institution, is of vital importance to South Dakota and has a genuine social function to perform. Its history, survival and growth all attest to the fact that in the past it has and can meet the needs of individuals and of society. Thus, the problem as we see it is to determine whether the local church as a South Dakota social institution is functioning efficiently or not at this time.

6. The author realizes that there is a wide difference of opinion as to what the function of the church is. As previously stated, however, this study purports to treat the church only as a social institution. Social theorists appear to be in fair accord as to what the primary function of religion is, or what part the church should play in the social evolution of community life in this country. As spokesman for the social theorists of rural life Sims⁴ has this to say concerning the nature of religion, and the needs of the rural church of today:

"Religion has to do with human values. It lays hold of the common values of life, intensifies, idealizes, universalizes, and seeks to conserve them. So the things, both personal and social, which men count most worth while become the objects of religion. But as circumstances change, so do these values. Hence, the objects of religion also tend to change, and there is thrust upon it the duty of laying hold of the new, while holding fast to that which is good in the old.

"The men who pioneered and settled America all professed essentially one general type of religion. It was concerned primarily with the other-worldly salvation of the individual. The soul was the object of chief value which men wanted most to conserve. In keeping with this aim the church was conceived to be an organization of saved individuals devoted to the saving of other individuals. It was a fold for gathering and sheltering the lost sheep. That done, its task was thought to be completed. As a social institution it was therefore an end in itself.

"The needs of this new day are clearly not those of the old, and the rural institutions that have not faced about from the old to the new are

3. A Federal Religious Census, including South Dakota, has been taken at four different periods—1890, 1906, 1916 and 1926.

4. Sims, N. L., *Elements of Rural Sociology*, (Revised Edition), Thomas Y. Crowell Publishing Co., New York, Chap. XXI, p. 505-515.

not adequately supplying those needs. This is the situation that confronts the rural church. In the face of it the pioneer church is proving inadequate. In many quarters it is languishing and dying, for the society has shifted its interests, and country life, its meaning. The church has not often sensed these facts. New life values are needing religious sanction and are not generally getting it.

“The country church must likewise become this sort of institution if it is to meet the needs of the new day. It must redirect its efforts and reconstruct its organization to community ends. Its exclusively pioneer habits and programs must be laid aside. It must do something more than hire annually an absentee preacher to retail sermons and hold revivals, if religion is to survive as a vital force and pagan forces not reconquer the rural regions.”

The Method.—The method used in the study has been to send a questionnaire to all the 1090 ministers in the state and to supplement the data thus received from Federal Religious Census materials and denominational yearbooks. The questionnaire card may be found in the appendix, page.—Questionnaire returns were received from 266 ministers, or approximately 25 per cent of the entire group. There proved to be a good workable cross section of replies from most of the denominations represented in the state, as well as a good distribution by counties, and different sized communities.

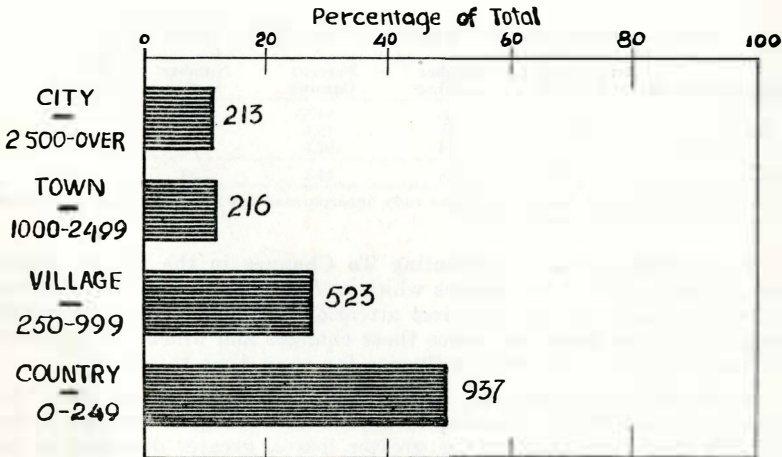


Fig. 2.—The numbers and distribution of churches classified by population groups.

When the study was first undertaken the plan was to make it a comparative study by denominations. This was abandoned because of insufficient data relative to some of the denominations and also because of wide difference in methods of reporting year book data.

In lieu of denominational comparisons, the various churches of the state were divided into four groups based on the size of place in which the church units are located. (Figure 2) By statistically testing various

tentative groupings, it was found that four fairly distinct classes existed among South Dakota churches. The first class included the open country churches as well as those located in small hamlets. The second class ranged from 250 to 1,000. The third class ranged from 1,000 to between 2,000 and 3,000. Because of the census characterization of places 2,500 and over as being urban, it was decided to adopt that same range in population for the fourth group. Hereafter in the study we have used the following classification based on size:

Descriptive Name	Range in population
Open country-hamlet	0-249
Village	250-999
Town	1000-2499
City	2500 and over

For the sake of brevity and convenience, we have abbreviated the classifications, speaking of them as open country-hamlet, village, town and city churches.

As a general score card or measuring stick for appraising the work and status of our South Dakota churches we have used the so-called "New Par Standard," as laid down by the town and country committee of the Home Mission Council.⁵ No formal attempt was made to score the individual churches, but rather to compare South Dakota averages with the norm suggested in the "New Par Standard."⁶

Table 1.—Gain and Loss in Population in South Dakota Towns 1920-1930.*

Population Group	Total Number of Towns	Number Gaining	Percent Gaining	Number Losing	Per Cent Losing
0-499	156	60	38.5	96	61.5
500-2499	101	49	48.5	52	51.5
2500 and over	16	14	87.5	2	12.5
Total	273	123	45.1	150	54.9

* Based on Federal Census. Includes only incorporated towns which have been listed in the census for both 1920 and 1930.

Background Trends Contributing To Changes in the Church Situation.—Before noting the changes which have taken place in the churches of South Dakota, we wish to direct attention to a few of the background trends that have helped to induce these changes and which will probably continue to exert a powerful influence for some time to come.

1. The drastic experience with drouth, insect pests, and the "depression" which South Dakotans of all classes have gone through in the last few years, has entailed far greater losses, greater depletion of reserves, and has required more relief than is commonly recognized.⁷

2. A large number of South Dakota farm trade centers have declined in population during the past decade from 1920 to 1930. (Table 1 and Figure 3) Farm trade centers, however, will continue to be our community

5. Morse, H. N., and Edmund deS. Brunner, *The Town and Country Church in the United States*, Geo. H. Doran, Co., New York, pp. 169-171.

6. South Dakota pastors may find it both suggestive and profitable to score their respective churches on the basis of this standard.

7. Landis, Paul H., *Rural Relief in South Dakota*, S. D. Exp. Station bulletin 289, 1934.

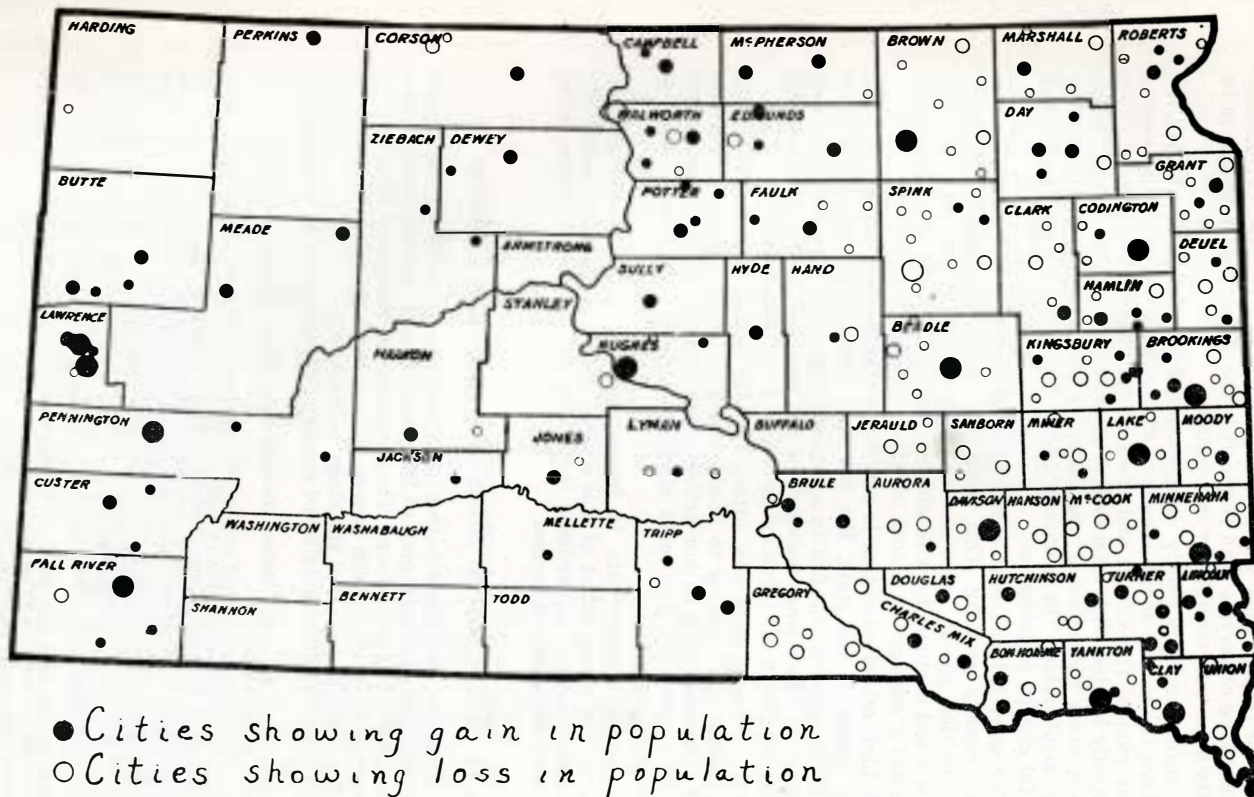


Fig. 3.—Farm trade centers in South Dakota which have gained or lost in population from 1920 to 1930.

centers in the future. They will probably offer a more limited and possibly specialized type of service than formerly.⁸ The church will continue to be one of its important community institutions.

The rural church is slowly disappearing from the open country, except where there are enough members of one denomination to support a full time pastor. The village and town church has the advantage of being centrally located with reference to community life. Because of its access to a more concentrated population it has a larger potential supporting membership. The economic factor is basic to a continuous and successful church organization.

3. The graveled and hard-surfaced road movement in South Dakota has been rapidly growing. This trend has tended to expand boundaries of communities, giving them a wider radius than in the past. It looks as if the rural community with either a hamlet, village, or town center, would finally emerge as a sort of rural municipality.

4. A high school education is rapidly becoming the "norm" for the average citizen in the state. For the year ending June 30, 1934, there were 35,132 students enrolled in a total of 435 high schools. Because of this improved educational background, the average citizen is gradually becoming clearer in his thinking and more community-minded.

Farm boys and girls now attending high school with nearby town boys and girls are learning to think together and to develop a common bond of fellowship. The author believes this present trend in high school education is probably the most significant, long-time social trend in South Dakota today.

5. The farm tenancy rate is increasing rapidly in South Dakota. (Figure 4) The social effect of this change makes for greater instability in the open country, and reduces materially the support of rural social institutions, especially churches.

II. The Church Situation in South Dakota

The Number and Distribution of Churches.—Considered as a unit South Dakota has an aggregate of 2217 local church organizations⁹, manned by a total of 1090 pastors.¹⁰ These church organizations have a combined membership of 294,622 persons¹¹, constituting approximately 43 per cent of the population of the state.¹² (Table 2).

If the churches were distributed equally over the state on a population

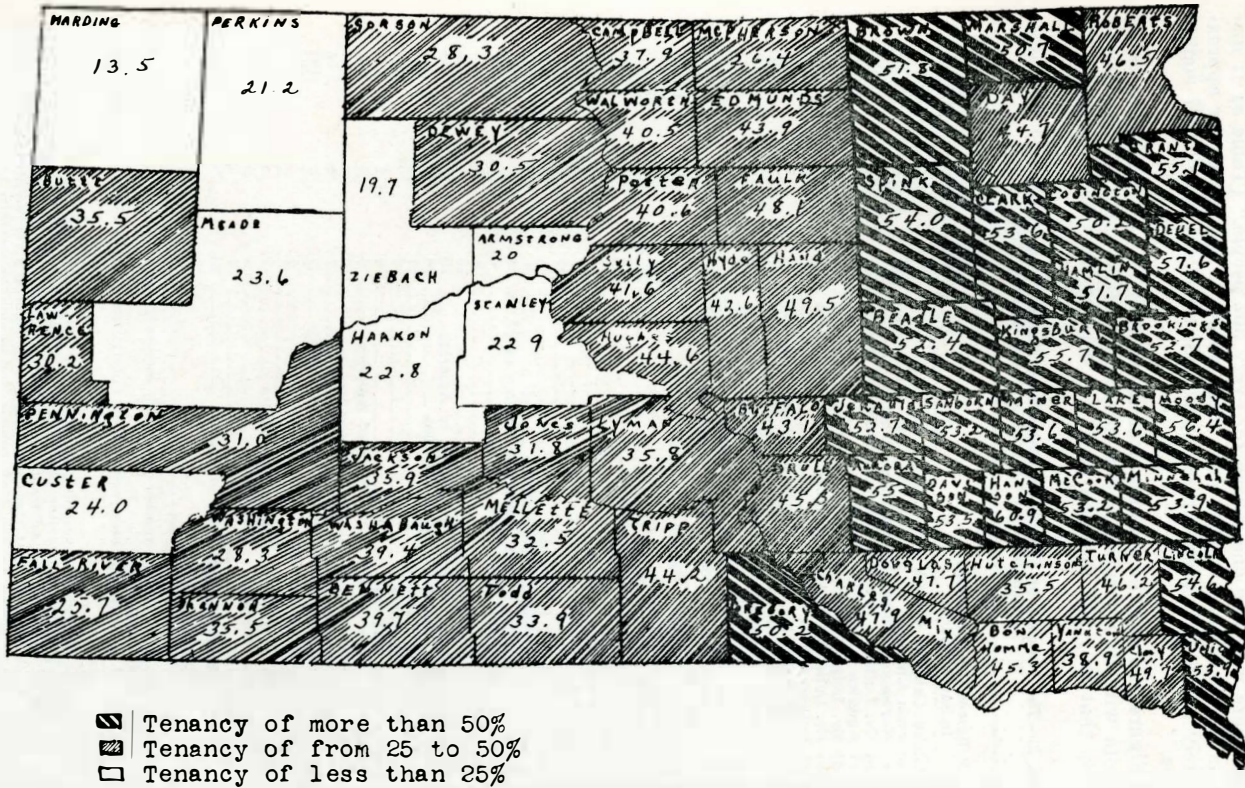
8. Landis, Paul H., *South Dakota Town-Country Trade Relations 1901-1931*, S. D. Exp. Station bulletin 274, 1932.

9. The data on the number of church organizations, as well as the number of members in the various denominations at work in the state, is for 1926 as published in the Federal Census of Religious Bodies. Various attempts have been made to bring this information up-to-date but the author has had to abandon such revision as being impractical, because of lack of uniformity in yearbook nomenclature, differences in denominational policy, etc. New religious census figures will, of course, be available in 1936. Based on yearbook data from five out of seven major denominations in the state, it would appear as though both the number of active church organizations and total members have decreased slightly since 1926. This is not surprising as the state population has also declined slightly since 1930. (See section on vacant, inactive and abandoned churches, page 60).

10. This list has been secured from yearbooks, revisions in mailing lists, and by correspondence with church supervising agencies.

11. Federal Census of Religious Bodies, 1926.

12. State Census of 1925.



* Based on the fifteenth Census of the United States

Fig. 4.—Farm Tenancy in South Dakota, 1930.

basis there would be one church for every 307 people.¹³ (Table 3) If distributed equally on a spatial basis there would be one church for approximately every civil township or, specifically, one for every 34.7 square miles.

Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of all churches in South Dakota without reference to denominational affiliation. The distribution shows that only 506 churches or 27 per cent of the total number in the

Table 2.—The Number of Church Organizations, Pastors, and Members of the Various Denominations Located in South Dakota, 1926.*

Religious Denominations In South Dakota	Number of Church Organizations	Number of Pastors†	Number of Church Members
1. Roman Catholic Church	409	200	97,077
2. Lutheran Churches	632	288	90,112
(a) Norwegian Lutheran Church of America	266	107	41,778
(b) Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri and other states	137	61	16,813
(c) American Lutheran Church	80	37	13,025
(d) Ev. Luth. Joint Synod of Wis. and other states	67	39	7,318
(e) Ev. Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America	32	20	5,141
(f) Lutheran Free Church	18	6	1,623
(g) United Danish Evang. Lutheran Church in America	7	3	832
(h) Danish Evang. Lutheran Church in America	7	3	780
(i) Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church	6	6	988
(j) Finnish Ev. Luth. Ch. of America or Synod Suomi	5	2	578
(k) United Lutheran Church in America	4	3	499
(l) Ev. Lutheran Church in America (Eielsen Synod)	3	1	377
3. Methodist Episcopal	239	116	29,514
4. Protestant Episcopal Church	142	32	17,601
5. Congregational Church	202	107	15,392
6. Presbyterian Church in the U. S.	156	68	12,800
7. Baptists—Northern Baptists Conv.	93	52	9,284
8. Reformed Church in the U. S.	43	13	2,790
9. Christian Reformed Church	11	11	2,694
10. Evangelical Church	47	20	2,350
11. Disciples of Christ	20	10	2,278
12. Reformed Church in America	25	18	1,787
13. Seventh-Day Adventist Denomination	30	25	1,439
14. General Conference of the Mennonite Church of N. A.	6	7	1,263
15. Hutterian Brethern Mennonite	6	10	700
16. Salvation Army	9	10	685
17. Church of Christ Scientist	16		528
18. Wesleyan Methodist Conn. (or church) of America	12	12	526
19. Free Methodist Church of North America	19	10	476
20. Church of the Nazarene	17	16	463
21. Independent Churches	7		461
22. Jewish Congregations	4	2	380
23. Swedish Ev. Free Church of the U. S. of America	6	3	331
24. Church of God	10	6	314
25. Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America	7	4	295
26. Reorg. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	3	2	188
27. Krimmer-Brueder-Gemeinde	2	4	168
28. Society of Friends	3	3	159
29. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	3	4	131
30. Christian and Missionary Alliance	5	6	98
31. Negro Baptists	2	3	86
32. All Other Denominations (16)	31	28	2,252
Denominations	2,217	1,090	294,622

* Ranked in order of the number of church members in the state. Census of Religious Bodies, 1926, Vol. 1, pp. 250-252.

† Number of pastors has been secured by questionnaires and other correspondence.

13. While the Federal Census of Religious Bodies for 1926 lists 2217 church organizations for South Dakota, the writer has been able to locate only 1889 in 1935. This last figure has been rechecked by yearbooks and mailing lists and with a resident pastor from each county. It is believed that the difference of 328 churches represents mainly outlying preaching points reported in the 1926 census, but which have since become vacant, inactive, or abandoned. (page 35.) Most of the charts and tables during the balance of the study have been prepared on the assumption that there is a total of 1889 churches.

state are located in the open country while 1383 or 73 per cent are located in the various hamlets, villages, towns, or cities of the state. Of the 506 churches located in the open country only 34 or slightly less than 7 per cent have resident pastors. (Figure 5) The remaining 472 country churches are served by non-resident pastors who live in some nearby village or town.

Table 3.—The Total Number of Church Organizations and the Average Number of People per Church in South Dakota From 1890 to 1926.

Year	Population ^a	Total Number of Church Organizations	Average Number of People Per Church
1926 -----	681,260	2217	307
1916 -----	583,747	2180	268
1906 -----	454,624	1801	252
1890 -----	328,808	1589	207

^a Population for South Dakota at nearest corresponding dates. For 1906, 1916 and 1926 the State census figures for 1905, 1915, and 1925 were used. In 1890 the religious census material was secured with the 11th census.

Of the 1383 churches located in villages and towns 72 per cent have resident pastors while 28 per cent are served by non-resident pastors. It is evident from these data that South Dakota is a state in which town and country churches are frequently yoked. In fact when all of the church organizations are treated as a unit it can be seen that there is an average of approximately two churches for each pastor.¹⁴

The geographical distribution of churches by counties is not at all uniform, even when differences in population density are considered.

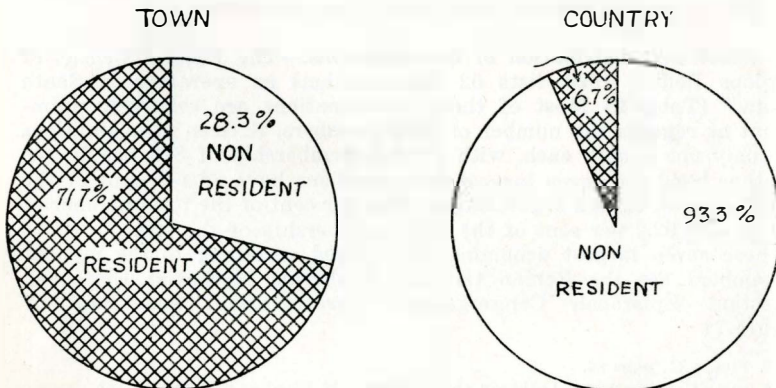


Fig. 5.—The per cent of resident and non-resident ministers in South Dakota located in town and country. (Data taken from questionnaire.)

14. Table 2, page 12.

Figure 6 shows the number of churches per 1,000 population as of 1935 for the various counties of the state. An index of one church per thousand population is the norm recommended by the National Home Missions Council. Applying this norm to South Dakota counties we find that there is not a single county in the state that is not seriously overchurch-ed. The distribution of the number of churches per thousand of population by counties is as follows:

- 8 counties have from 1 to 2 churches per thousand people
- 31 counties have from 2 to 3 churches per thousand people
- 17 counties have from 3 to 4 churches per thousand people
- 7 counties have from 4 to 5 churches per thousand people
- 4 counties have from 5 to 6 churches per thousand people
- 2 counties have from 6 to 7 churches per thousand people

In appraising this question of overchurching one should also keep in mind that in nearly all of the counties the ratio of church membership to total population is less than 50 per cent.¹⁵

The total population for South Dakota in 1930 was 692,849. Applying the Home Mission Council's norm of one church per thousand population it can quickly be seen that we should have 693 churches whereas we actually have 1889. Thus we have a surplus of 1196 churches or almost three times as many separate church units as we should have.

Table 4.—The Distribution of Churches Among the Seven Major Denominations in the State Arranged by Four Different Sized Population Groupings.* (1934)

Denominations	(0-249)	(250-999)	(1000-2499)	(2500-Up)
1. Roman Catholics -----	51.0	29.5	9.5	4.2
2. Lutheran -----	57.0	28.5	8.7	6.0
3. Methodist -----	40.4	28.3	14.3	7.0
4. Episcopal -----	67.1	8.1	14.1	10.7
5. Congregational -----	46.8	34.3	11.9	7.0
6. Presbyterian -----	49.1	29.5	12.5	8.9
7. Baptist -----	33.7	29.2	14.6	21.3

* Data secured from Denominational Yearbooks and mailing lists.

Number and distribution of denominations.—The Federal Census of Religious Bodies, 1926, lists 52 denominations as operating in South Dakota.¹⁶ (Table 2) Most of these denominations are relatively unimportant as regards the number of their members. Sixteen denominations have only one church each, with a total membership of 873 people. On the other hand the seven largest denominations have 85 per cent of the total number of church organizations, 81.4 per cent of the total number of pastors, and 92.2 per cent of the total membership of the state.

These seven largest denominations ranked according to the number of members are the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist Episcopal, Protestant Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptist.¹⁷ (Figure 7)

15. Figure 11, page 26.

16. In this count, twelve Lutheran church bodies are listed as only one church.

17. The Catholics and Lutherans use a somewhat different system in their practices determining church membership. In these two denominations a child is counted as a church member at baptism. In the Protestant evangelical churches baptized children are not counted as members until they have formally joined the church; thus in some respects a better census count of members would be based on the number of families in each denomination rather than individual membership.

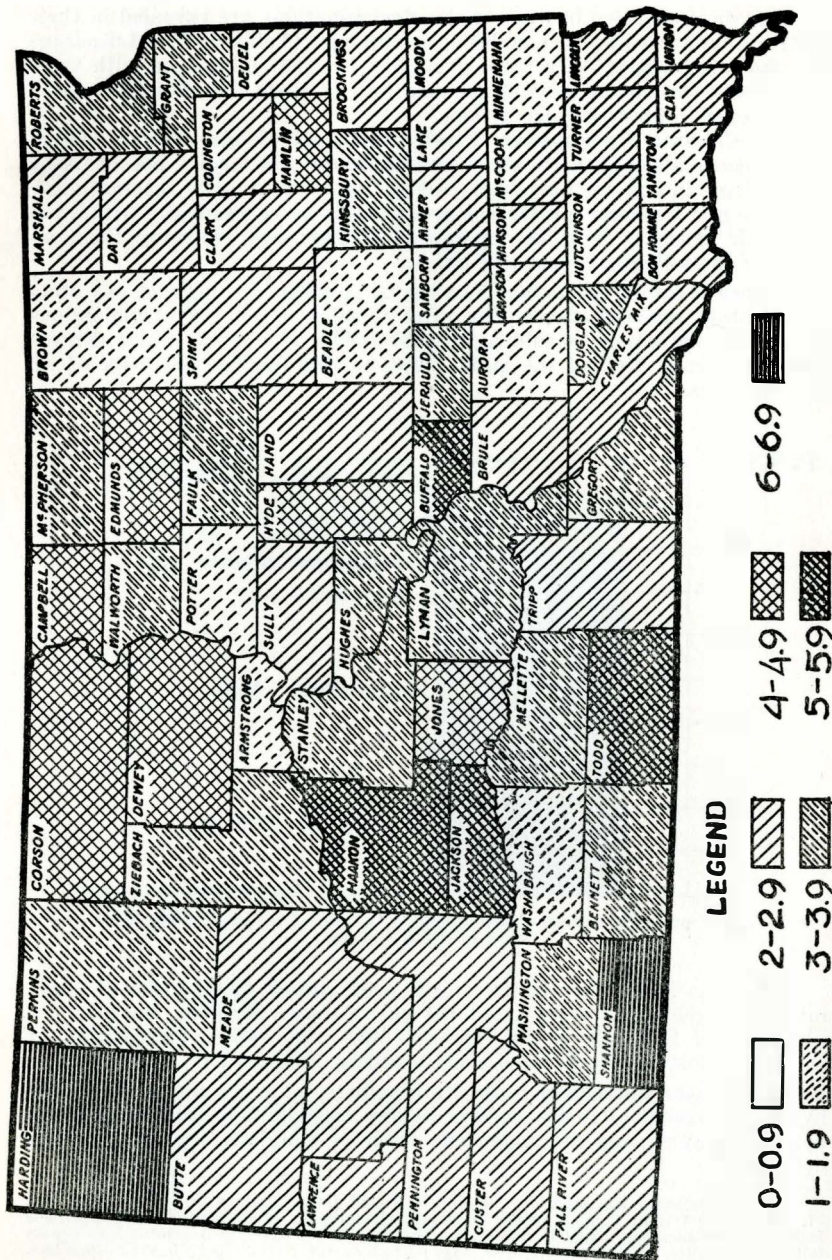


Fig. 6.—The number of churches of all denominations by counties per 1000 population, 1934.

Certain tendencies in these major denominations are revealed in their distribution according to population groupings. (Table 4) The Lutherans are the most distinctively rural group, as is usually the case with them throughout the middle west. More than half of their churches are located in the open country-hamlet group.

The Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregational church distributions also appear to show similar trends, but largely because they have large Indian memberships located on open-country reservations.¹⁸ The five non-Lutheran protestant groups seem to be gradually withdrawing their churches from the open-country field and centering them instead in the villages, towns, and cities.

Figure 8 shows the actual location of churches throughout the state by separate denominations. The total number of church organizations for all denominations should aggregate 1889.¹⁹ The seven major denominations occupy five of the eight maps as they include the bulk of all the churches.

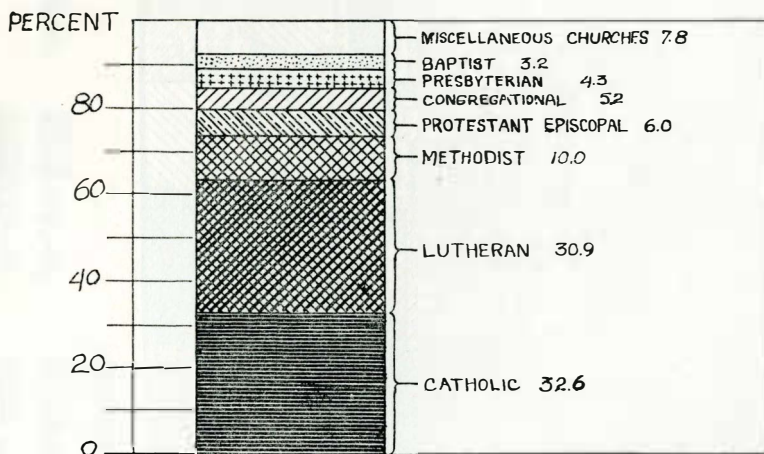


Fig. 7.—The percentage of all church members in each of the seven major denominations in South Dakota.

Attention is directed to the fairly wide spread distribution of these major denominations throughout the entire state. Probably the best explanation of this fact is the corresponding wide spread distribution of the eight most populous foreign nationalities. (Figure 9)

Denominations Correlated with Nationalities.—The sequence of events in the settlement of South Dakota throws considerable light on how the present complex and heterogeneous form of religious organization has developed.

18. The Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregationalist groups have 113, 97, 29, and 19 Indian Chapels respectively in their numbers of church organizations. The Indian church members listed in the same order for their respective denominations are as follows: Catholics, 6300; Episcopalian, 8710; Presbyterians, 1612; and Congregationalists, 1016.

19. See footnote 5, page 8.

Most of the settlement of the state took place between 1856 and 1910. Settlement first started in the southeastern corner of the state in the fifties and sixties. The movement spread in a fan-like shape toward the west, north, and northeast, so that by the end of the eighties the eastern part of South Dakota was relatively well-settled. The free land of the western part of the state had its biggest boom in the following twenty years, so that these counties were fairly well-settled by 1910.

The settlers of the state have originated from three sources: migrants from other states, (Table 5) foreign-born immigrants, and native-born South Dakotans. At any given time since the beginning of the state the migrants from other states have constituted a larger proportion of the population than the foreign-born. (Table 6) The trend in numbers has been towards a gradual decrease in both migrants from other states and the foreign-born, while the proportion of native-born South Dakotans has increased correspondingly. At the present time the latter group constitutes 56.5 per cent of the total.

Table 5.—Number and Per Cent of Total Population in South Dakota Which Have Migrated Here From Other States, 1930.*

State	Number	Per Cent of Total 1930 Population
Iowa -----	67,514	9.74
Minnesota -----	31,923	4.61
Nebraska -----	26,874	3.88
Illinois -----	23,458	3.39
Wisconsin -----	22,319	3.22
North Dakota -----	10,647	1.54
Missouri -----	7,979	1.15
Indiana -----	4,635	.67
Kansas -----	4,445	.64
New York -----	4,324	.62
Ohio -----	4,182	.60
Michigan -----	4,152	.59
Pennsylvania -----	3,635	.52
Montana -----	2,281	.31
Colorado -----	1,722	.25
Other States -----	13,364	1.93
Total Population 1930—692,849	233,454	33.69

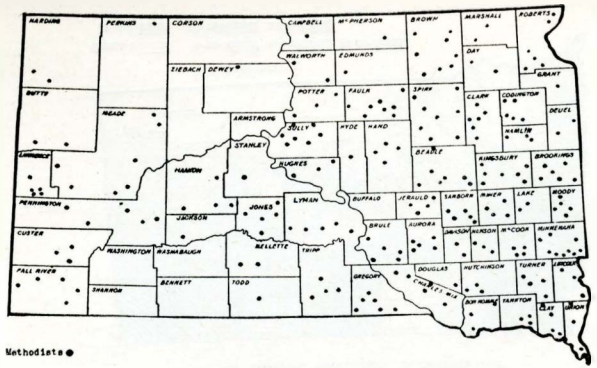
* Based on Federal Census, 1930.

Table 6.—The Number and Per Cent of Native-Born South Dakotans, Native-Born Migrants From Other States, and Foreign-Born Population Living in South Dakota 1880-1930.*

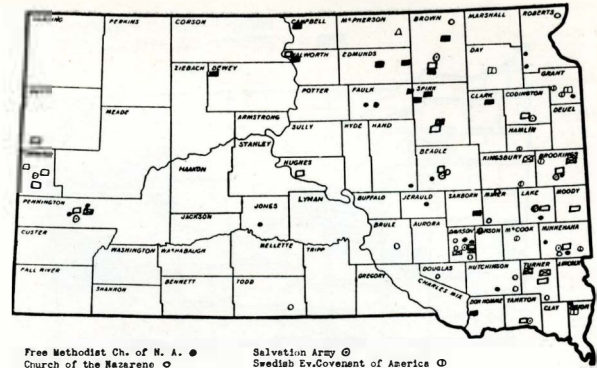
Year	Native-Born				Foreign-Born	
	South Dakotans Number	Percent	From Other States Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1930 -----	391,393	56.5	233,454	33.7	65,648	9.5
1920 -----	303,260	47.6	247,194	38.8	82,534	13.0
1910 -----	225,125	38.6	257,973	44.2	100,790	17.3
1900 -----	160,220	39.9	152,842	38.1	88,508	22.0
1890 -----	83,246	25.3	154,507	47.0	91,055	27.7
1880 -----	12,936	13.2	47,674	48.5	37,650	38.3

* Based on the Federal Census.

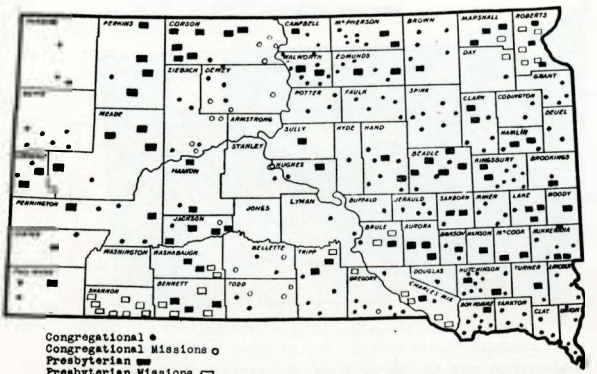
South Dakota has always been a predominantly agricultural state. (Figure 10) Owing to the relative lateness in the settlement of the state, farms were taken up rapidly, so that by 1910 very little free land was left.



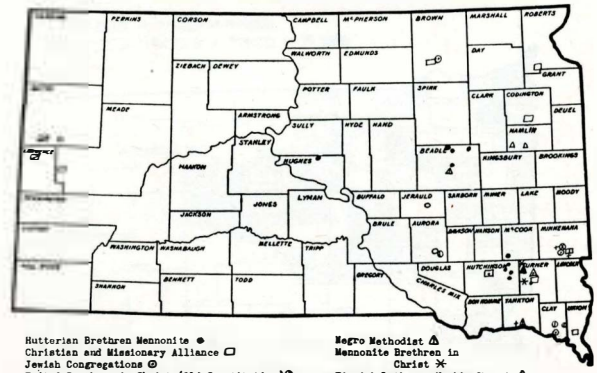
Methodists ●



Free Methodist Ch. of N. A. ●
 Church of the Nazarene ○
 Church of Christ Scientist □
 Wesleyan Methodist of America ■
 Church of God ☒
 Salvation Army △
 Swedish Ev. Covenant of America ○
 Swedish Ev. Free Church of the U. S. □
 Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers) △



Congregational ●
 Congregational Missions ○
 Presbyterian ■
 Presbyterian Missions □

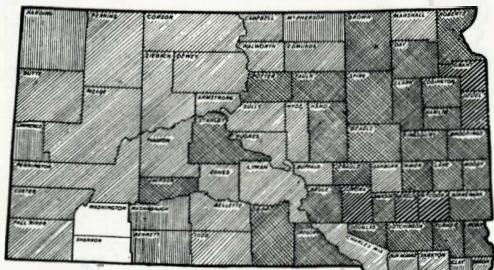


Hutterian Brethren Mennonites ●
 Christian and Missionary Alliance □
 Jewish Congregations ○
 United Brethren in Christ (Old Constitution) ○
 Reorg. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ☒
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ☒
 Negro Baptists +
 Negro Methodist △
 Mennonite Brethren in Christ ✕
 Finnish Lutheran Met' l. Church △
 Mennonite Brethren Ch. of N. A. ■
 Conference of Defenseless Mennonites △
 United Brethren in Christ ☒
 Society of Friends ○

Fig. 8.—The distribution of churches in South Dakota by denominations. (Read left column first.)

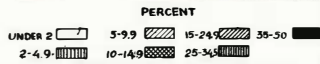
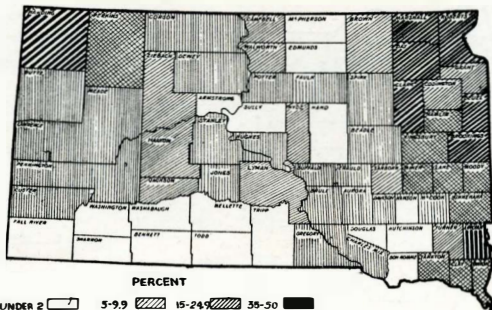
DISTRIBUTION OF GERMANS IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES, 1930



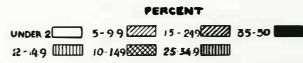
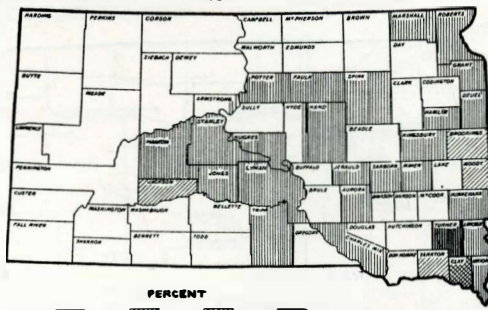
DISTRIBUTION OF NORWEGIANS IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES, 1930



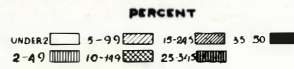
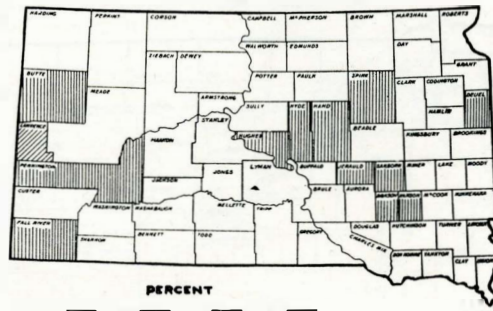
DISTRIBUTION OF DANES IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES
1930



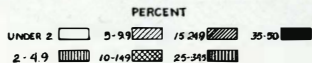
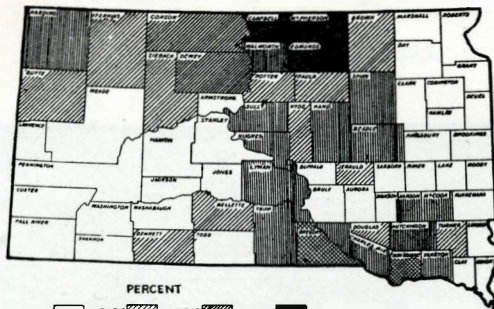
DISTRIBUTION OF ENGLISH IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES
1930



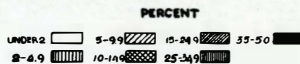
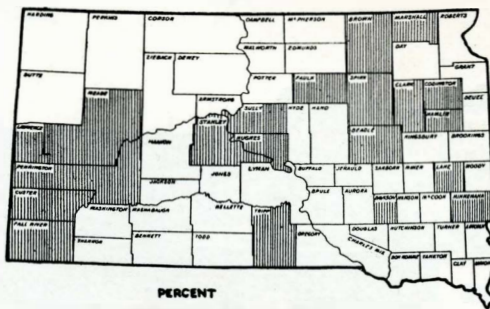
DISTRIBUTION OF RUSSIANS IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES 1930



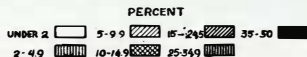
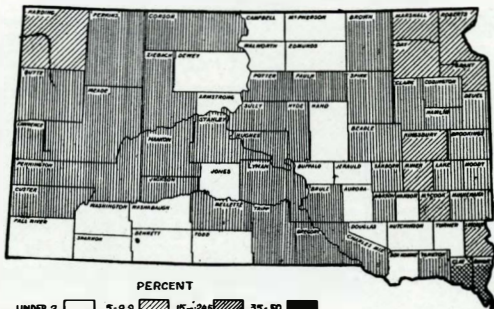
DISTRIBUTION OF CANADIANS IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES
1930



DISTRIBUTION OF SWEDES IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES, 1930



DISTRIBUTION OF HOLLANDERS IN SO. DAKOTA

FOREIGN BORN, NATIVE BORN OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTIES
1930

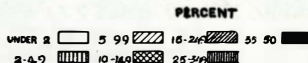
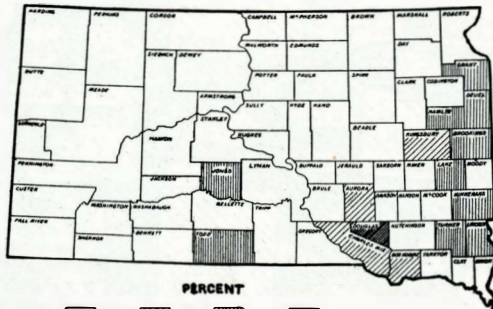


Fig. 9.—The distribution of nationalities in South Dakota. (Includes foreign-born, native-born of foreign or mixed parentage and shows the percent that it is of the total population by counties, 1930). (Read left column first.)

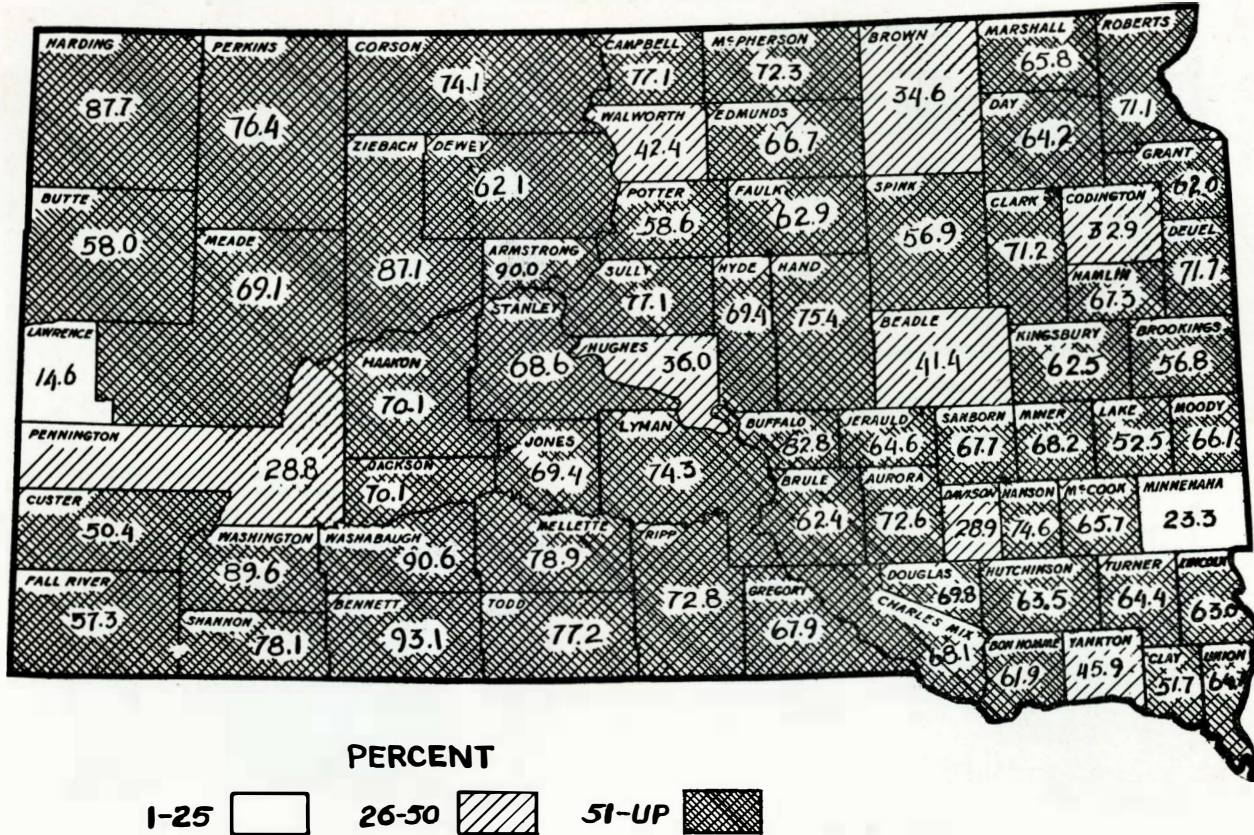


Fig. 10.—The per cent of total population living on farms, by counties, 1930.

The settlers who came to South Dakota from foreign countries and from other states were largely of north-European stock. They were attracted to this section both from an occupational and a climatic standpoint. They were, largely, Germans, Scandinavians, British, Russians, and Hollanders. These people in the main were land-minded. They were interested in coming here partly because of the opportunity for acquiring a homestead and partly because this region seemed to be so much like the north-European plains area.

There appears to have been a very definite relationship between the nationalities that settled in this state and the religious denominations which have been established. (Tables 6 and 7) A careful examination of the nationalities and denominations shows clearly that the former

Table 7.—Country of Origin of the Fourteen Largest Denominations in South Dakota.*

Denominations	Countries of Origin	Parent Churches
1. Roman Catholics	South Germany, South Ireland, French Canada, France, Poland, Bohemia, and Austria.	Roman Catholic
2. Lutherans	North Germany, Scandinavia, and Russia.	Lutheran State Churches in Europe.
3. Methodist Episcopal	England	Church of England.
4. Congregational	England	Church of England. —(Separatists)
5. Presbyterian	England	Church of England. —(Puritans)
6. Episcopalian	England	Church of England.
7. Baptists	England	Church of England. —(Separatists) ¹
8. Reformed Church in the U. S.	Germany	German Reformed Church.
9. Christian Reformed Church	United States	Dutch Reformed Church.
10. Evangelical Church	United States (Germans)	Lutheran, Methodist.
11. Disciples of Christ	United States	Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian & others.
12. Reformed Church in America	Holland	Reformed Church in Holland.
13. Seventh-Day Adventist Denomination	United States	First-day Adventists.
14. General Conference of the Mennonite Church of N. A.	United States	Various Mennonite Congregations.

* Only these 14 denominations in the state had more than 1000 members in 1926.

1. Page 77, Vol 2, Census of Religious Bodies.

brought their cultural baggage, including their religious affiliation, with them. Settlers coming from south Germany, south Ireland, France, or Poland soon established Catholic churches in their new home communities.

People coming from the north German provinces, or the Scandinavian countries with equal dispatch established Lutheran churches. The Hollanders established Dutch Reform churches or as is more latterly known, The Reformed Church of America. British people, namely, the English, Scotch, North Irish, and Welsh brought in churches of British origin such as the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Protestant Episcopal.

The Russians who have settled in South Dakota were originally of German stock. Their ancestors left Germany in the eighteenth century

and settled in Russia to obtain religious freedom. This group was composed largely of Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Mennonites.

The denominational affiliations of the foreign-born immigrants were in most instances the same as the migrants who came to South Dakota from other states. (Table 7) Thus our seven major denominations were all originally of foreign extraction.

Church Membership.—Table 8 shows the growth of church organizations, total number of members, average number of members per church and the per cent that church members were of the total population from 1890 to 1926. When the percentage of membership increases for each decade is compared with the population increases for the same periods, the church situation seems to have been in a growing, healthy condition. (Table 8) It can now be seen, however, that during this same period there was taking place a rapid rise in property values, in incomes, in the average family standard of living and in population growth. This period is now known to have been one of the most prosperous periods in the history of South Dakota, as well as for all American agriculture. During this same period relatively large amounts of Home Mission money were being sent to subsidize weak churches in South Dakota from various denominations, with the purpose of laying the foundations for a prosperous future.

As a consequence of these combined stimuli most of the denominations tended to over-expand much the same as did business concerns and other types of social institutions. In fact, the period of expansion coincided almost identically with the period of prosperity. Thus, inevitably, competition and rivalry developed between denominations.

An entirely different economic situation has prevailed since the depression. Property values and incomes have declined sharply. People have tried desperately to maintain their former standards of living, but with little success. Within the last three years it is probable that the population of this state has declined.²⁰ It is more than likely that church membership has also declined, at least in proportion to the decline in population.²¹

Considerable difference exists in the various counties of the state as to their ratio of church membership to total population. Considering the state as a whole, 43 per cent of the population were church members in 1926. (Figure 11) In a few counties where the ratio is more than 50 per cent it is probable that an unusual situation existed. For instance, in Dewey county, an unusually large per cent of the population were Indian Catholics and Episcopalians. In those denominations all members of the family who are baptized are listed as church members. In consequence, the ratio of church members to total population appears to be abnormally high.

A similar situation, but with different denominations, prevails in Douglas, Hutchinson, Bon Homme, Lake, Codington, and McPherson counties. In these counties the predominant membership belongs to some branch of the Lutheran denomination instead of the Roman Catholic or

20. As yet, neither the population figures for the state census for 1935 nor the federal agricultural census are available.

21. This impression has been gleaned from yearbook reports of five of the seven major denominations.

Table 8.—The Growth of Church Organizations, Total Number of Members, Average Number of Members Per Church, and the Per Cent Those Church Members are of the Total Population by Decades (1890-1926)

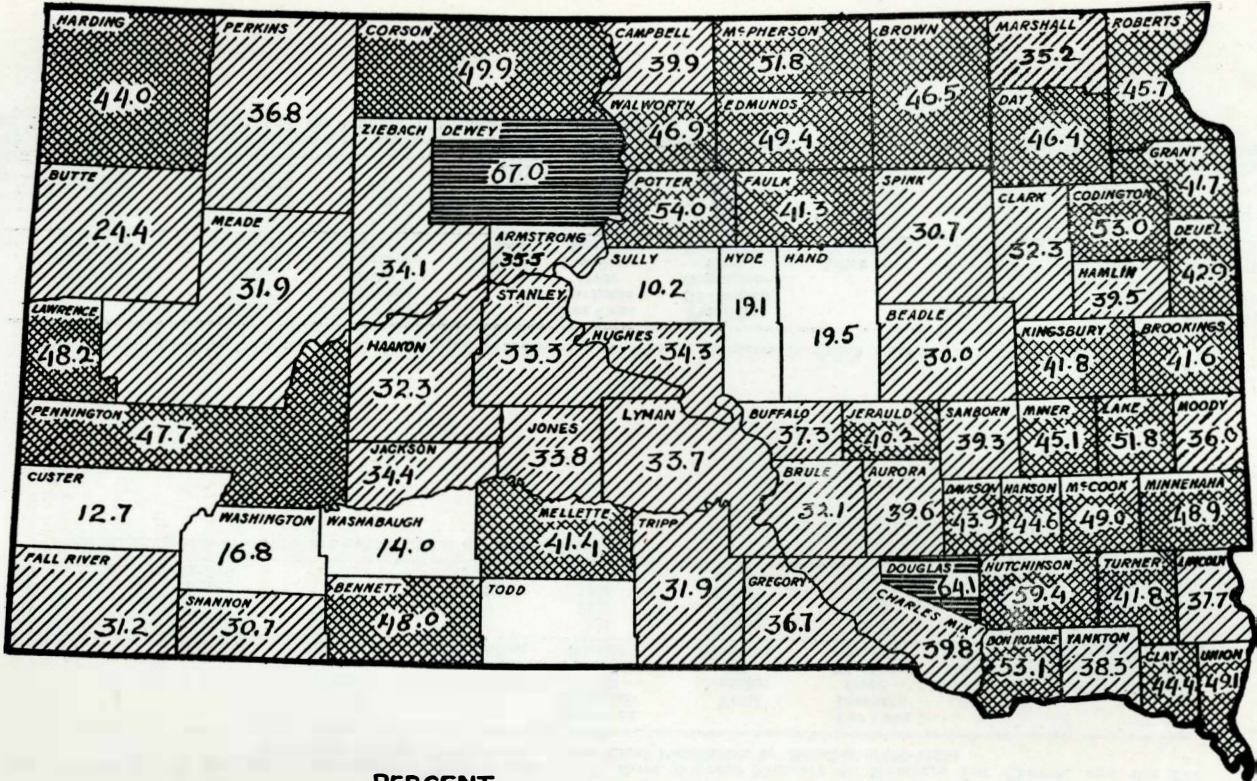
Decades	Population*	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade	Total Number Of Church Organizations	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade	Total Number Of Members	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade	Average Number of Members Per Church	Per Cent Church Members Are of Total Population
1926 -----	681,260	16.7	2,217	1.7	294,622	48.0	133	43.2
1916 -----	583,747	28.2	2,179	21.2	199,017	22.9	91	34.1
1906 -----	455,185	37.5	1,789	13.2	161,961	89.5	90	35.6
1890 -----	330,975	---	1,589	---	85,490	---	54	25.8

* Population figures are for State census years of 1925, 1915, 1905.

Table 9.—The Increase in the Value and Indebtedness on Church Property in South Dakota from 1890-1926.*

Decades	Total Number Of Church Organizations Reporting	Total Value Of Church Property	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade	Average Value	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade	Total No. Of Church Organizations Reporting	Amount Of Debt	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade	Average Debt	Per Cent Increase Over Previous Decade
1926 -----	1917	\$17,285,300	115.4	\$9017	97.4	388	\$1,508,419	141.5	\$3887	111.0
1916 -----	1757	8,024,832	76.8	4567	44.2	339	624,597	169.1	1842	83.3
1906 -----	1433	4,538,013	157.7	3167	136.2	231	232,123	---	1005	---
1890 -----	1313	1,761,277	---	1341	---	---	---	---	---	---

* For the year 1890, the census makes no distinction between the total number of church organizations and the total number reporting church property. This figure is an estimate of the number reporting church property.



PERCENT

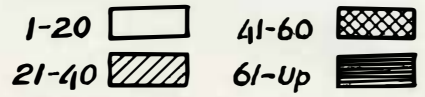


Fig. 11.—Ratio of church membership to total population, by counties, 1926.

Episcopal.²² Here the same method of counting all baptized members of the family as church members also produces an unusually large ratio of church membership to total population.

It is evident that the size of place that the church is located in ordinarily has a direct bearing on the average membership per church. Taking all denominations into consideration the open country-hamlet church averages 47.8 members, the village church 78.5, the town church 108.1, while the city church averages 348.²³ (Figure 12)

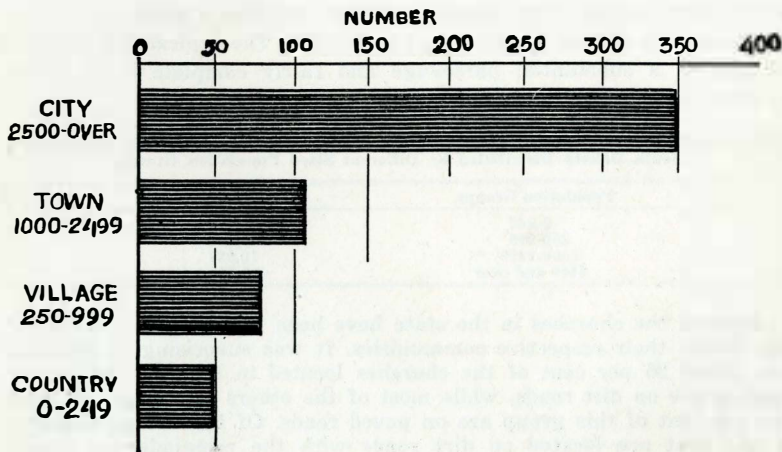


Fig. 12.—The average church membership for all denominations in classified locations.

The size of place also effects the relative proportion of farm and non-farm families who belong to the church as members. Figure 13 shows that in the open country-hamlet church the proportion of farm families is slightly over 82 per cent of the total; in the village church, 56 per cent of its total membership consists of farm families; 42 per cent in the town church; but only 12 per cent of the city church membership. Much of these differences between farm and non-farm families is due to their relative difference in numbers in the community. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence that country people prefer to affiliate with churches in the hamlets, villages, and smaller towns, rather than with city churches.

Church Buildings and Equipment.—One of the most marked changes in the church situation in the 36 year period from 1890 to 1926 was the increase in value of church property. (Table 9) The total values practically

22. See figure 9, dealing with the German and Russian population in South Dakota for 1930. Also note the Lutheran location of churches in figure 8, page 18.

23. The par standard does not call for a specific ratio of church membership to local population, it merely suggests one church to one thousand people. Our South Dakota ratio of church membership per one thousand population is 43 per cent. If we had only one church for each thousand people this would mean an average church membership of 430 instead of 133 which we now have.

doubled with each successive decade. Church indebtedness increased in about the same proportion as did value of property.

The average value of church property varied markedly between churches located in the open country and hamlets, villages, towns, and cities.²⁴ (Figure 14) The typical open country-hamlet church property was found to be without parsonage and consisted of a one-story, one-room wooden structure valued at \$2,432. The typical village church property included a small parsonage and a church building and was valued at \$7,033. The typical town church property included a parsonage and a more complete church layout valued at \$10,937. The typical city property consists of a substantial parsonage and fairly complete brick church building valued at \$55,000. (Table 10)

Table 10.—The Average Value of Church Property in the Seven Major Denominations in South Dakota Distributed by Different Sized Population Groups.

Population Groups	Average Value
0-249	\$ 2,432
250-999	7,033
1000-2499	10,937
2500 and over	55,000

Most of the churches in the state have been located rather strategically within their respective communities. It was surprising to find that only about 25 per cent of the churches located in the open country or hamlets are on dirt roads, while most of the others are on gravel. Only two per cent of this group are on paved roads. Of the village churches, 15 per cent are located on dirt roads with the remainder on gravel.

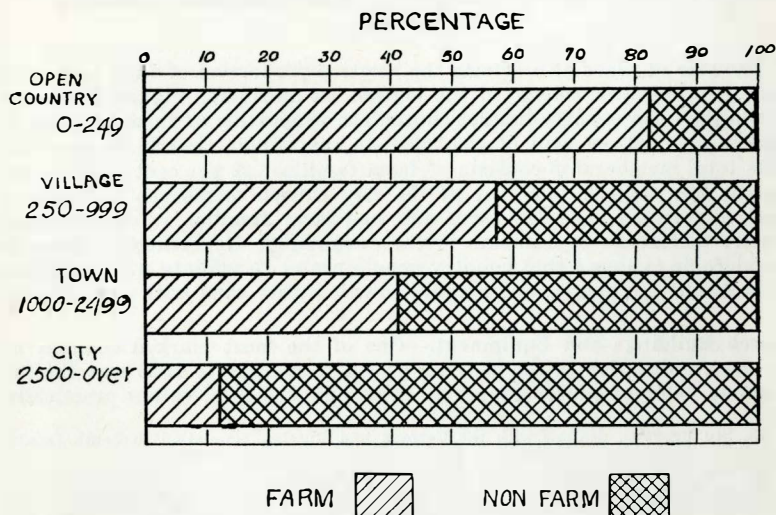


Fig. 13.—The percentage of farm and non-farm families as found in classified churches.

24. Based on data from questionnaires and yearbooks.

Approximately 80 per cent of the town churches are located on graveled roads, with 20 per cent on paving. In contrast, 82 per cent of the city churches are located on paved streets with the remaining 18 per cent on gravel.

Churches have apparently given considerable thought to the question of locating their church buildings on improved roads or streets. Taken as a whole, only about 10 per cent of the churches in the state are now on dirt roads, with fully 90 per cent on either paving or gravel. Much of this favorable showing is, of course, due to the fact that over 73 per cent of all churches in South Dakota are located in villages, towns, and cities.

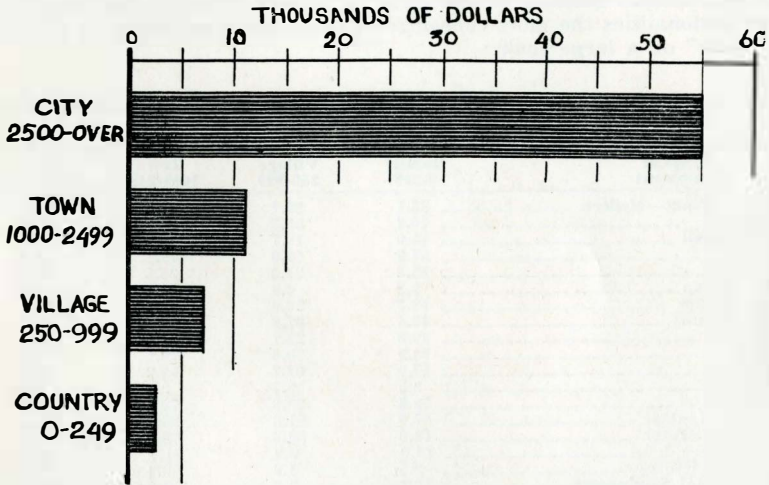


Fig. 14.—The average value of church property for all denominations as found in classified locations.

Table 11 indicates that the extent of value and equipment of churches bears about the same relationship to size of place as do average membership and budget. In general churches located in the open-country or hamlets are considerably under-equipped when looked at from the standpoint of community needs. As we get into larger places the value and extent of equipment increases rapidly. Approximately three-fourths of the city church plants are fairly up-to-date and modern in their equipment. Probably the weakest feature in equipment is its inadequacy for taking care of the recreational needs of young people. It appears that in the future, churches will either have to improve their own equipment for handling young people or else cooperate much more closely with community recreational agencies. If this is not done the church as a social institution will have failed to grasp one of its most challenging opportunities for social guidance and social control.

Ministers.—The ministers of the various 52 denominations operating in the state aggregate 1090. This number, when compared with the total number of church organizations constitutes a ratio of approximately one minister to every two churches. The plan of “yoking” churches, that

is, having one minister serve two or more churches, is more common among the major denominations than among the minor ones. This practice is probably due to the fact that the opportunity for combining churches into circuits²⁵ is much greater in the larger groups. (Figure 8) The denominations having a large number of church organizations, and widely distributed, are in a good position to employ the "yoked" plan, especially when times are hard. As an illustration, the Lutherans have from five to twenty-five or more churches per county in those areas where the Scandinavians and Germans constitute a considerable portion of the local population. (Compare figures 8 and 9) The same principle applies to the Roman Catholics, Methodists, and most of the other larger denominations. Because of the close correlation between denominations and nationalities the more concentrated areas are most likely to practice "yoking" on a large scale.

Table 11.—The Percentage Distribution of Selected Types of Equipment Found Among Classified Churches.*

Types of Equipment	Hamlet 0-249	Village 250-999	Town 1000-2499	City 2500-over
Church Plant—Modern	35.1	30.7	70.8	72.5
Basement	70.2	53.3	80.5	85.0
Parish Hall	14.0	10.7	26.8	42.5
Kitchen	57.9	52.0	78.1	82.5
Stage	15.8	24.0	26.8	47.5
Pipe Organ	5.3	4.0	17.1	42.5
Rest Rooms	19.3	20.0	51.2	70.0
S. S. Rooms	40.4	37.3	68.3	80.0
Library	29.8	22.7	24.2	40.0
Piano	64.9	70.6	78.1	80.0
Organ	57.9	62.7	73.2	40.0
Radio	3.5	6.7	2.4	5.0
Furnaces	59.6	69.3	78.2	85.0
Electric Lights	57.9	81.3	95.2	87.5
Running Water	14.0	33.3	75.6	82.5
Stereopticon	14.0	9.3	31.7	32.5
Moving Pictures	3.5	1.3	2.4	7.5
Recreational Equipment	12.3	9.3	14.6	22.5

* Data secured from questionnaires returned in connection with this study.

Considered from various angles the most important factor in producing "yoked" churches is the economic one. This is amply evidenced in the varying practices found in churches located in different sized places. (Figure 15) It is mainly in the larger city churches that the membership and budget are sufficiently ample to support a pastor exclusively their own. On the other hand, churches with only a handful of members cannot afford to employ a full-time pastor for themselves. The line of least resistance is to be "yoked" with one or more nearby churches in jointly employing a pastor, each church to have a fractional part of his time. More than 70 per cent of the city churches are served by a full-time pastor. Among the groups located in places under 2,500 only 40 per cent employ a man on full time.

Ministers residing in open country and hamlet groups, are paid an average cash salary of less than \$1,000 per year. The village and town resident ministers are paid about the same cash salary, namely \$1,200.

25. This, of course, refers to combining churches into a circuit within the minister's own denomination.

The city churches pay their resident ministers an average salary of \$1,800 per year.

In addition to the cash salary, most ministers are furnished a residence free of charge. Certain churches also follow the custom of turning over special collections taken at Easter, Christmas, etc., to the minister. Some churches also encourage special fees to be paid for weddings, burials, and baptisms. There is apparently no uniformity among denominations in regard to prerequisites, fees, etc., so that an attempt has been made to average them. Taken by and large, in normal times it is estimated that the average minister realizes from \$200 to \$1,000 per year from prerequisites, fees, and special offerings. When this is added to the cash salary, the amount probably compares favorably with the income of professional and business men who live in similar sized towns, and have a similar training and abilities. The depression, however, has brought home acutely the financial inability of communities to adequately support all of their churches during the depression periods. Because the church is a voluntary organization and has no compulsive system to enforce collections, it has probably felt the effects of the depression more than tax supported institutions.

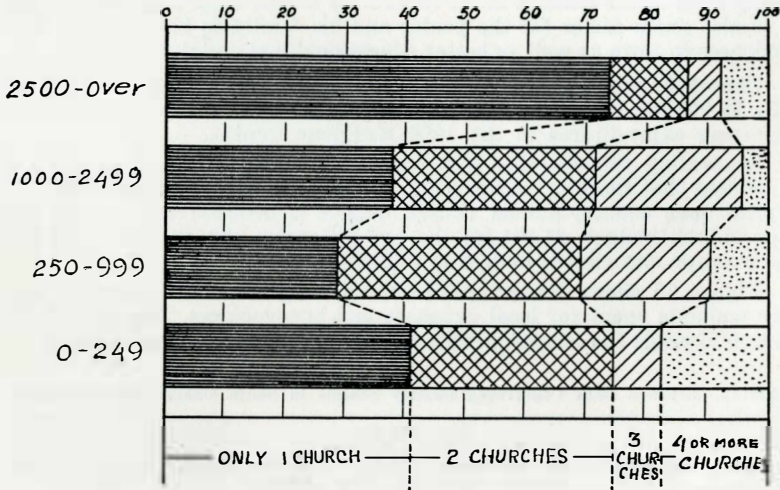


Fig. 15.—The per cent of resident ministers in classified locations serving one or more churches.*

* The numbers to the left of the ordinate represent different sized places ranging from the open-country hamlet through villages, towns and cities.

From the standpoint of conventionally trained ministers, South Dakota makes a relatively good showing. Slightly over 70 per cent of all ministers have both college and seminary training while approximately five per cent have had neither college nor seminary training. This rather favorable showing in seminary training can best be explained by the fact that nearly half of South Dakota's pastors belong either to the Catholic or Lutheran denominations. These two groups not only maintain

their own private colleges and seminaries, but have insisted on doctrinal training for their ministers. The other five Protestant evangelical groups have perhaps laid less emphasis on doctrinal training, and because of this have a somewhat smaller percentage who are seminary trained.

The average age of ministers residing in the different sized towns has also been compared. Because of the practice for most young ministers to start their church work in the smaller charges, and in less densely populated areas one would expect that the open country-hamlet churches would have by far the largest percentage of young ministers. This is not the case, however, as the larger city churches select young or middle aged pastors, especially those with marked abilities. For this reason the city church has the bulk of its pastors in the young and middle aged groups. Just the opposite is true of the open-country hamlet village, and town churches. In those areas promotion is slower and the proportion of older men, 55 years and over, is somewhat higher.

There is a tendency for ministers to reside in hamlet, village, town, or city instead of in open country. Our findings show that of 1090 pastors only 34 reside in the open country. The remaining 472 open-country churches are "yoked" in circuits where the pastor and his family live in town. There are, doubtless, many good reasons for this. Until very recently most of the villages in the state were looked upon as growing units. It is also much easier for the pastor and his family to have modern conveniences in town as well as better educational and social advantages.

Church Expenditures.—The average church budget in South Dakota is only \$2,112 per church, or a total of \$4,378,366 for all the 2073 churches reporting expenditures in the 1926 Religious Census.

Separating the churches into four groups based on size of place, it is evident that there is considerable variation in amounts expended.²⁶ The typical open country-hamlet church budget is \$864.51; the average village church budget, \$1,394.14; the average town church, \$1,716.17; and the average city church budget is \$4,318.82.

Figure 16 shows these typical church budgets divided into the relative amounts spent for local expenses and benevolences. The typical city church expends the largest percentage of its budget for benevolences.

Table 12.—Selected Data Concerning Sunday Schools in South Dakota from 1906-1926.*

Decades	Number of Church Organizations	Churches Having Sunday Schools	Per Cent That Churches Having Sunday Schools Are of the Total Number of Churches	Sunday School Members	Per Cent of Increase over Previous Decade	Average Number Sunday School Members Per Church
1926	2217	1602	72.3	123,270	24.7	77
1916	2179	1558	71.5	98,825	38.1	63
1906	1789	1337	74.7	71,554		54

* Based on the Census of Religious Bodies for 1926, 1916, and 1906.

Subsidiary Church Organizations.—It is clearly recognized by churches everywhere that subsidiary organizations, especially those having to do with religious education, are among the more important activities of the church. Table 12 shows the Federal Religious Census findings on Sunday schools in South Dakota from 1906 to 1926. These data indicate

26. These figures are for 1934, taken from schedules and denominational yearbooks.

that in each decade an increasing number of churches have added Sunday schools. There is also a substantial increase in total and average Sunday school membership as compared to population growth.

The ratio of Sunday school membership to adult church membership has also increased. More churches are apparently stressing religious education than formerly. Along with this trend is a tendency for more denominations to accept children into church membership at an earlier

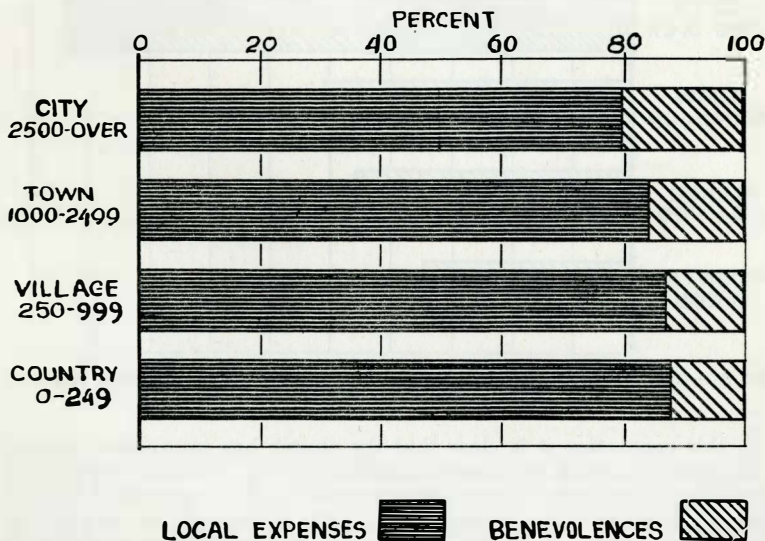


Fig. 16.—The relative amounts of local expenses and benevolences as found in budgets of classified churches.

age. The custom appears to be growing of baptizing and enrolling children into church membership at an early age, rather than waiting for them to grow up into mature adulthood and then trying to convert them. More than 80 per cent of the 1889 churches had Sunday schools in 1935.²⁷ When divided into open country-hamlet, village, town, and city groups it was found that the city churches have a higher percentage of their number maintaining Sunday schools, daily vacation Bible schools, and young people's societies. The ratio of Sunday school membership to adult membership in these organizations shows that the three smaller groups take the lead. This is probably because of the fact that churches in these three smaller sized towns have less competition with other distractions bidding for young people's time and patronage, such as is found in cities.

The average sized Sunday school membership, based on the size of place in which the churches are located is shown in figure 17. Here again, from a percentage standpoint, the open country-hamlet group makes the best showing.

27. Data based on questionnaire returns and yearbook data.

Community Activities.—When looked at as a unit, the community activities of the majority of churches in South Dakota are conservative and of the traditional, conventional type. Most of the activities are directed toward serving their own church membership rather than the community as a whole.

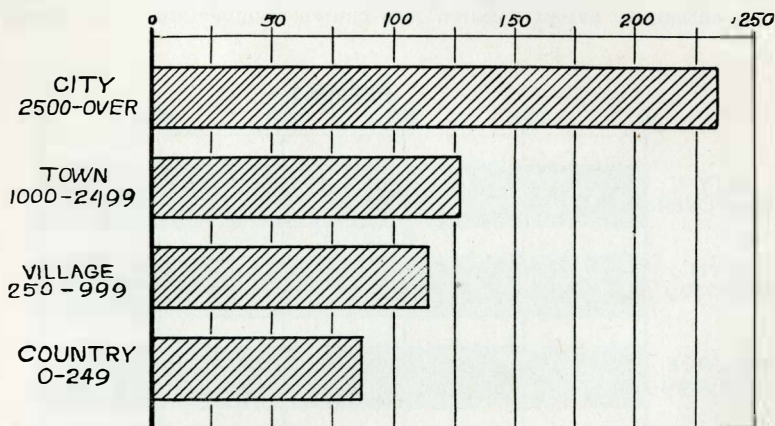


Fig. 17.—The average sized membership of Sunday Schools in classified churches. (Data taken from questionnaire.)

In this connection it is clear that the church has interpreted literally its mission to preach the gospel, teach doctrines, cultivate family life, and guide members in morals and temperance. To a somewhat less extent the church has also interpreted literally its mission to care for the widows and orphans, heal the sick through hospitalization, and to urge care for its poor.

Outside these traditional functions, the church has given relatively little attention to other community activities. It should be noted that some effort has been made to influence social legislation, especially as it affects family life. Examples of this may be found in marriage laws, week day religious instruction in the public schools, liquor control and Sabbath observance.

When the churches were asked by questionnaire, "what do you regard as the outstanding contribution your church has made to local community life," the following activities were reported and ranked in the following order:

1. Preaching the gospel.
2. Character training through religious instruction.
3. Exerting a Christian influence on family life.
4. Moral and temperance guidance.
5. Special effort to reach the unchurched.

The following replies quoted verbatim help to explain the attitude of the conservative majority in regard to community activities. "Our church does not deal with community problems. Its task is to preach the unaltered Gospel of Christ." Another church states, "The big problem of the church is to reach the unchurched." A third group replied, "Our church

does not mess much in the outward things in community life but rather devotes its main effort to preaching and teaching the Gospel." A fourth writes, "Ours is not one of the much publicized social-gospel churches; we face the tremendous task of proclaiming adequately the Gospel message. Our commission is derived from the Lord of the church, as a body we have no other work. Whether the community has a baseball team, a certain political party majority or a certain type of liquor law, is, we believe, not within the concern of the Christian church."

Only about a third of the churches of the state are participating in a definite way toward helping to promote community activities outside the immediate jurisdiction of their respective church groups. The following list of community activities is stated in the order of their frequency and gives the percentage of total churches participating.

Activities	Per cent Participating
Moral and temperance	46
Relief activities	35
Adult education	33
Youth-serving organizations, Scouts, 4-H clubs	33
Sponsoring musical activities	32
Promoting interest in needed social legislation	29
Orphanage projects	29
Community club gatherings	26
Hospitals	24
Rural life appreciation	24
Harvest festivals	21
Radio programs	20
Recreational activities	20

In trying to account for the strongly individualistic and in-group attitudes of the majority of the churches in the state the following influences have probably had a bearing:

1. The churches are privately supported and naturally feel responsible primarily to their own membership.
2. About one-third of the denominations and two-thirds of the church organizations in South Dakota are still influenced to a considerable extent by foreign culture patterns and ideas.
3. Two of the largest denominations operating in the state still maintain parochial schools as a part of their religious program.
4. Most of the communities of the state have not become "community conscious" as yet and consequently have not made a long term audit of their social institutions.

Vacant, Inactive or Abandoned Churches.—For various reasons it is difficult to terminate the life of a church organization once it has been established as a going concern. As in most living organisms, the final stage of death is usually preceded by sickness. Some church members, especially older ones, develop numerous sentimental attachments to a church and refuse to analyze them on the basis of utility. Church indebtedness or other entangling alliances may also be the unwitting cause of a church's life being prolonged beyond its period of normal usefulness.

These, and many other causes, often prevent a rational adjustment to a given situation.

Oddly enough, most churches when confronted with the problem of an alternate choice between union with some other denomination or lowering its own standards will choose the latter, believing it to be the more honorable course.

When a church is definitely on the decline there are usually three stages that it goes through before losing its identity. The first stage is for the church to be vacated by the pastor because of insufficient financial resources. Finding it difficult to secure a full-time successor the church then enters the second stage; namely, that of going into a non-resident "yoked" relationship with some other church or churches. In this way they are responsible for only a fractional part of the minister's salary. As a result of this attenuated program, the membership begins to dwindle away, possibly seeking a church relationship elsewhere. Thus the vacant church merges into one that is more or less inactive. The third stage is reached when the membership becomes so small that the attempt to continue seems futile. This may end in complete abandonment or fusion into some other church.

It should not be understood, of course, that all small, struggling churches go through these same particular stages. Many of our most successful churches of today started in a small way but for one reason or another have become well established through the years. Migrations of population, changes in economic resources, and other similar trends outside of human control may determine the destiny of some church organizations. Prolonged drouths, economic depressions, an epidemic of bank failures, have in many instances undermined the economic stability of the community and its institutions including the church.

In 1926 there were 328 more local church organizations listed in the census than we have been able to find this year (1935). Many of these were apparently church organizations without buildings or equipment. They were mere preaching points which were being cultivated by some denominations with a view to possibly later establishing a church there. The combined drouth and depression situation of recent years have made their continuance impractical. In a few other cases church buildings have actually been abandoned, or sold, and moved to some new location by another denomination. The exact number of such inactive or abandoned churches has been difficult to determine because of differences in practice among various denominations.

Figure 18 shows a detailed study made over eight counties with reference to church abandonment. Of the 238 churches in these counties, (1926), approximately 15 per cent are now vacant, inactive, or abandoned. Assuming that these eight counties are typical of the state, we estimate that there are over 300 vacant, inactive, or abandoned churches in the state as a whole.

Church Comity.—Whatever justification there may have been for theological disputes and church schisms of the past, they are not what we now need to clarify the church situation in South Dakota. One of our major difficulties at present is to know how to integrate and weld church membership into a working unit against the forces of unrighteousness.

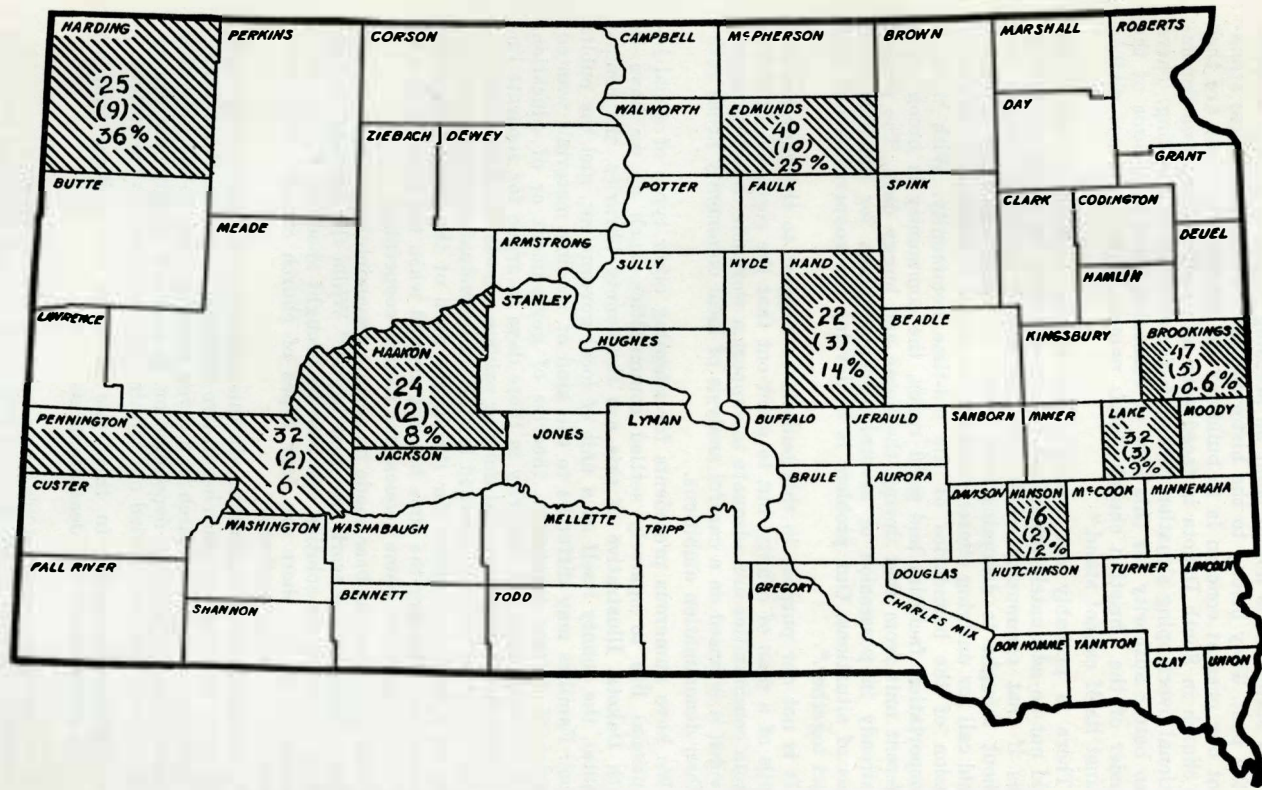


Fig. 18.—Abandoned churches since 1926 in eight typical counties of South Dakota.
 Legend: Top figure in each case is the total number of churches in the county.
 The figure in parenthesis represents the number of abandoned churches in the county.
 The percentage figure represents the percentage of abandoned churches to total active churches in the county.

This statement is not to point an accusing finger at church troubles of the past. They belong to the historical past. From a practical standpoint our present concern is to build for the future. The facts are that the church in South Dakota is faced with an overchurching and denominational overlapping situation that calls for courageous handling. There is no better authority for this sort of reasoning than the words of the founder of the Christian church itself; namely, that "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

There is probably not a single community in South Dakota that could not be adequately organized for church work on a self-supporting basis if that community would face its church problems frankly and without thought to denominational pride. In some cases the situation would call for unifying church factions; in others it would call for an expansion of the boundaries of the old-time community. With modern transportation facilities and good roads, the community is becoming a different unit from that during the horse and buggy days. The church is already in possession of several workable plans for handling both types of situations. Our problem is to develop the cooperation and will to act together.²⁸

It is not our purpose in this bulletin to suggest to the churches the details of a plan of comity, but to point out that the resources of South Dakota communities are adequate to support a workable church program, provided it is based on a careful analysis of local community needs rather than denomination ambitions.

We have numerous precedents for adapting other types of social institutional life to sparsely settled communities, such as we have in South Dakota. Illustrative of this are the county libraries, the county hospital, the county itself as a unit of local government, and the public school. Families may differ as to the kind of reading materials wanted, theories of disease treatment, theories of government or of education, but few would have the temerity in these days to argue for separate libraries, hospitals, governmental units or private schools. In these social institutional fields we have learned to subvert individual motions and cooperate on a united program for the larger good of the community. One may well ask whether the time has not arrived when the community can justifiably make the same request for church cooperation.

Some progress has been made by certain denominations toward church comity—although the work has just begun.²⁹ While the problem is perplexing at times, its solution can best be brought about by the churches themselves. So far there are four types of church comity which have proven to be fairly workable.

1. Denominational exchange.—In this arrangement two denominations agree to an exchange of churches in two different localities. For example, the members of a weak church in a given locality agree to merge with a strong church in the other denomination. In another locality just the opposite process may be carried out within the same two denominations.

2. Undenominational.—In this type of union the uniting churches sever all connections with denominations.

28. See the opening section of this bulletin, captioned *The Problem*, page 5.

29. Most of the cases of church comity thus far in the state have been within four denominations, namely, the Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists.

3. Federated.—This is where two or more denominations maintain a joint local worship but each of the uniting bodies continues to keep affiliations with its own denomination.

4. Affiliated.—When this type of union takes place a loose connection is maintained for certain purposes with some one denomination. Some advantage may be gained by such an arrangement in receiving financial help, help in securing pastors, or for protection from denominational competition.

So far, plan number one has been most popular in South Dakota as it does not necessitate any sacrifice of denominational pride. Most of the cases of comity have taken place in smaller towns, from a desire to do away with overchurching. Three or four denominations of the state have used this method quite effectively in a number of instances.

An important factor which may accelerate this movement toward union is the recent agreement among Home Mission Boards to withhold Home Mission funds from being sent into the state except in cases where the need is clear cut, and where there is no denominational overlapping. Such a movement of integration, of course, will have to move more slowly. There are many entangling alliances which will be difficult to undo without causing some hardship and self-sacrifice. However, many of these will appear less formidable as the benefits of community cooperation become more apparent.

III. Summary and Conclusions

The Problem.—Our present lack of community socialization or the capacity and will to act together in community life is our most serious problem at the present time. Time will be necessary to correct this difficulty, although the process can be greatly accelerated by a recognition of the problem and a willingness on the part of citizens to forego personal and "in-group" ambitions for the sake of the common good.

Viewpoint.—Sociology recognizes the pivotal place that religion, (expressed through the church), can and should have in family, community, state and national life. To serve most effectively, however, the church must do more than minister to the personal needs of the membership. It must go a step further in ministering to community needs through organized community life. To attain its rightful place the church must work shoulder to shoulder with other social institutions and agencies so as to reconstruct community life from the inside.

Method of Study.—Questionnaires were sent out to all the 1,090 ministers located in South Dakota. The findings from these replies were supplemented by denominational year-book data and the Federal Census of Religious Bodies taken in 1890, 1906, 1916, and 1926.

Background Trends.—Various social and economic factors such as drouth, insect pests, the "depression", decline in many of the smaller trade centers during the past decade, the rapid increase in high school education, the graveled and hard-surfaced roads, and increasing farm tenancy rate have all affected the church situation either favorably or unfavorably. Those that are unfavorable need not be looked upon as insurmountable, but rather as factors to which to become adjusted.

Number and Distribution of Churches.—South Dakota has approximately 3 times too many churches if we apply the standard laid down by the National Home Mission Council. Their suggested "norm" is one church per thousand people. The distribution of churches in the state is somewhat unequal. Two of the most over-churched areas in the state are in the West River country where the population is sparse. It is probable that some adaptation of the larger parish plan should be worked out for our more sparsely populated areas.

Number and Distribution of Denominations.—There were 52 denominations operating in the state in 1926. However, seven of the major denominations have 85 per cent of the total number of churches, 81.4 per cent of the pastors, and 92.2 per cent of the total church membership. Fortunately four of these major denominations are the ones who have taken the lead in the beginning towards church comity.

Association of Denominations and Nationalities.—Practically all the foreign nationalities who have come into South Dakota as immigrants or as migrants from other states, have brought their respective denominational affiliations with them. This emerging part accounts for our surplus of denominations. In time, through greater Americanization and socialization, the number of denominations will be greatly reduced through some form of church comity.

Church Membership.—South Dakota has a total of 294,622 church members. This is approximately 43 per cent of the total population. The ratio of church membership to population has been steadily increasing since 1890. The average number of members per church is only 133. When distributed among open country-hamlet, village, town, and city churches, however, it is found that two thirds of the churches have less than 100 members each. The total membership is split up into too small units to make much impact on the various communities in the state. Applying the Home Mission Council norm of one church to 1,000 people this would mean an average church membership of 430, assuming that 43 per cent of the population are members.

Church Building Equipment.—The majority of our church units are located in the open country-hamlet, village, and small town locations. The typical church building of these groups is a small, wooden structure, meagerly equipped, holding services once a week and served by a non-resident pastor. Such a plant is, of course, inadequate to satisfy community needs.

Ministers.—Among the village, town and city churches, 71.7 per cent of the ministers are resident, and 28.3 per cent are non-resident; the open country churches are served by 6.7 per cent resident ministers while 93.3 per cent are non-resident. Having to serve more than one church imposes a handicap on ministers who are desirous of serving the entire community.

Church Expenditures.—The average church budget for South Dakota is slightly more than \$2,000. Practically one half the churches have a budget of less than \$1,000 per year. Either amount is inadequate to carry on an effective church program.

Subsidiary Church Organizations.—Most of the South Dakota churches maintain Sunday schools and have young people's societies. The average ratio of the Sunday school membership to church membership is

considerably below the par standard for the National Home Mission Council. The program of the average Sunday school and young people's societies is inclined to be routinized and more or less lifeless. Probably it is in this field of religious education and working with young people that the church is weakest in South Dakota.

Community Activities.—More than one-third of the ministers and churches of the state actively participate in community activities outside of serving their own respective memberships in the traditional way. While this personal type of service to church members is both necessary and worthy, the program must extend farther than that if community life is to be changed. The situation calls for the church to redirect its efforts to community ends.

Inactive and Abandoned Churches.—Since 1926 from ten to fifteen per cent of the churches in the state have either become vacant, inactive, or abandoned. This is the inevitable result of over-churching, and reflects the economic and social inability of the community to support the work. More churches of this type will be forced out of activity unless denominations cooperate in making readjustments. When looked at from a non-doctrinal standpoint, the average community could probably get better religious service by having the number of churches reduced to one-half or one-third of the number now in operation.

Church Comity.—Some progress has been made in this state towards some form of church comity although the work has just begun. The favorite method thus far in cutting down the number of churches is for two denominations to effect an exchange in two different communities. In this way two weak churches are merged with two strong churches. Such a movement toward universalization will, in the very nature of the case, have to move slowly. The principle involved is simple but the task of carrying it out is much more complicated.

Despite this fact, church comity carried on by the denominations themselves is the most hopeful approach to solving the church situation.

Appendix A

(The obverse and reverse sides of questionnaire cards sent to all ministers in the state)

Church Questionnaire

Name of Church ----- Denomination -----

Community Problems.—Do you or your local church organization take an active part in community activities? (To facilitate replying to this question the following list of suggestive activities is included to indicate the type of program we have in mind. Place a check () in the parenthesis opposite the particular activities your church has engaged in. Extra space has been left for additional items in each major field of social activity to be filled in if desired.)

Economic Organization

- a. Improved production methods ()
- b. Improved marketing methods ()
- c. Better town-country relations ()
- d. Fall Harvest Festival ()
- e. Community Fair ()
- f. ----- ()
- g. ----- ()

Family Life

- a. Marriage problems consultations ()
- b. Establishing "Family Altar" ()
- c. Family visitations program ()
- d. Orphanage project ()
- e. ----- ()
- f. ----- ()

Educational Service

- a. Adult Education ()
- b. Character Education ()
- c. Library Service ()
- d. Community course—Lyceum ()
- e. Sponsoring reading groups ()
- f. Week-day religious teaching ()
- g. Sponsoring "depression" college ()
- h. Mission study course ()
- i. Summer School or D.V.B.S ()
- j. ----- ()
- k. ----- ()

Political Program

- a. Serving in political office ()
- b. Sponsoring forum for discussion of political questions ()
- c. Special effort to secure passage of needed state or national legislation ()
- d. ----- ()
- e. ----- ()

Religious Comity

- a. Church cooperation ()
- b. Special effort to reach un-churched ()
- c. ----- ()
- d. ----- ()

Communication Facilities

- a. Improved road effort ()
- b. Broadcasting radio programs ()
- c. ----- ()
- d. ----- ()

Aesthetic Expression

- a. Organizing and conducting music program ()
- b. Art study program ()
- c. Debate, dramatics ()
- d. Community beautification ()
- e. Effort to increase appreciation of rural life ()
- f. Worthy use of leisure time ()
- g. ----- ()
- h. ----- ()

Health Efforts

- a. Physical examinations for school children ()

- b. Milk for undernourished children in the community ()
 - c. Health campaign ()
 - d. Promotion for or operation of hospitals ()
 - e. ----- ()
 - f. ----- ()
 - e. Community gatherings ()
 - f. Building parks, lakes, etc. ()
 - g. Tennis courts ()
 - h. ----- ()
 - i. ----- ()
- Ethical Relationships**
- a. Organizing or sponsoring youth serving organizations ()
 - b. Improved race relations ()
 - c. Relief activities ()
 - d. Morals and temperance reform ()
 - e. ----- ()
- Recreational Activities**
- a. Playground program ()
 - b. Campaign for swimming pool ()
 - c. Baseball league ()
 - d. Other minor sports ()

Of the activities checked in the foregoing list which do you regard as the outstanding contributions which your church has made to the community?

Has the contribution referred to had any direct relation to what you consider the most urgent social problems of your community? -----

Enumerate special items of interest met with in working on this project.

When was this activity started? ----- Is it still being carried on? -----

Personal Data:

Age ---- Years in this community ---- Date ordained -----
 Nationality ----- Education: High School -----
 College ----- Seminary ----- No. of churches in
 this pastorate ----- In town ----- In open country ----- Married
 ----- Church activities of wife -----

Membership:

Church members (over 13 years of age) (1934) ----- No. of separate families (farm) ----- (non-farm) ----- Members: S. S. ----- Week day ----- Y. P. S. (Sr.) ----- (Jr.) -----

Property:

Value of church ----- Parsonage ----- Other buildings -----
 Is church plant modern? ----- Does it have: Basement ----- Parish hall ----- Kitchen ----- S. S. Rooms ----- Library ----- Rest Rooms ----- Stage ----- Pipe organ ----- Piano ----- Organ ----- Radio ----- Furnace, type ----- Running water ----- Electric lights ----- Motion picture machine ----- Stereopticon -----
 What is the size of church grounds? ----- Does it have recreation equipment? -----

Finances:

Minister's salary ----- Amount paid by local church (1933) -----

----- Total budget ----- Local expenses -----
 Benevolences -----

Activities:

Do you have an open forum or discussion group? -----
 Total number of meetings per year in church building ----- Do
 you have evening services on topics of interest? -----
 A program of evangelism ----- No. of outside speakers
 (1933) ----- Midweek services ----- Separate chil-
 dren's services -----

Community Relationships:

Is church building used by other groups? -----
 Is church on paved, gravelled or dirt road? -----
 Is church located in open country or town? -----
 Give estimate of proportion of church members (all denominations) to
 total population in the local township (include town) -----

Signed: -----
 P. O. -----

Appendix B

(A suggestive score card for rural churches devised by the town and country committee, of the Home Missions Council)³⁰

Physical Equipment

1. A comfortable, attractive parsonage with modern improvements, furnished rent free.
2. Auditorium with seating capacity adequate to maximum attendance at regular services.
3. Pipe organ or piano.
4. Space for social and recreational purposes fitted with movable chairs and a platform, and large enough for the largest crowds in the habit of assembling there.
5. Separate rooms or curtained spaces for Sunday school classes or departments.
6. Moving-picture machine or stereopticon facilities.
7. A well-planned, well-equipped kitchen.
8. Sanitary lavatories.
9. Parking space for automobile or sheds for horses.
10. All property kept in good repair and sightly condition.
11. Bulletin boards for display of church announcements.
12. Playground.
13. Recreational equipment—games, volley ball, croquet, quoits (in-door and outdoor) and the like.

Religious and Missionary Education

14. Sunday school maintained throughout the year.
15. Sunday school enrollment at least equal to church membership,

³⁰ Morse, H. N. and Brunner, Edmund De S., *The Town and Country Church in the United States*, Geo. H. Doran Co., New York, 1925, pp. 169-171.

with an average attendance of at least two-thirds of its membership.

16. Definite and regular attempt to bring pupils into church membership and specific instruction in preparation therefor.
17. Teacher training or normal class regularly provided.
18. Definite provision for enlistment and training of leaders for church and community work other than in Sunday school.
19. Communicant classes regularly held in preparation for church membership.
20. Week-day religious instruction provided.
21. Daily Vacation Bible school held.
22. School of Missions, or systematic Mission Study class regularly held.
23. The missionary work of the church regularly presented from the pulpit and in the Sunday school.
24. At least one representative in professional Christian service.

Finance

25. The church budget, including both local expenses and benevolences, adopted annually by the congregation.
26. Every-member canvass for weekly offerings made annually on the basis of the local and benevolent budget adopted; all church members canvassed; envelope system used.
27. The budget of benevolence either meeting the denominational apportionment in full or equal to one-third of the current expense budget (Interchurch standard 25 per cent.)
28. All current bills paid monthly.
29. A systematic plan of payments on principal and interest of debt on the church property, if any.
- 30 Property insured.

Pastor

31. A pastor resident within the bounds of the community.
32. A pastor giving full time to the work of this church.
33. The pastor receiving a total salary of at least \$1,500 a year and free use of house (Interchurch figure, \$1,200).

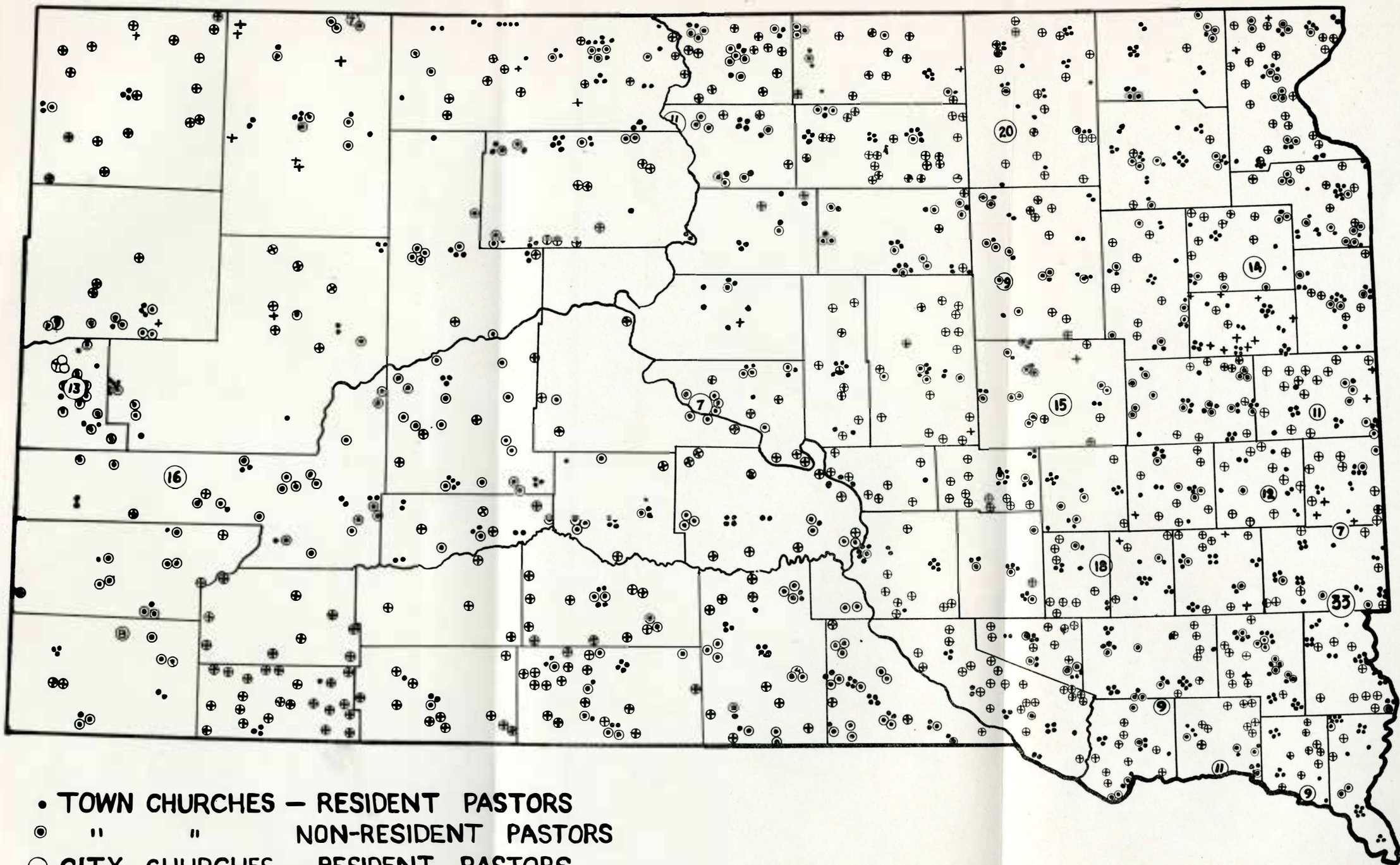
Program

34. At least one service of worship every Sunday.
35. Regular mid-week services.
36. Church works systematically to extend its parish to the limits of the community.
37. Church works systematically to serve all occupational classes in the community and all racial elements which do not have their own Protestant churches.
38. A definite program setting goals for the year's work adopted annually by the officers and congregation and held steadily before the attention of the church.
39. A definite assumption of responsibility with respect to some part of this program (as in 38) by at least 25 per cent of the active members.
40. Systematic evangelism aimed to reach the entire community and every class in the community.

41. A minimum net membership increase of 10 per cent each year.
42. Community service a definite part of the church's work, including a definite program of community cooperation led by or participated in by the church.
43. Definite organized activities for all the various age and sex-groups in the congregation and community (as in Young People's Societies, Men's Brotherhood, Boy Scouts, or similar efforts.)
44. A systematic and cumulative survey of the parish with a view to determining the church relationships and religious needs of every family, and such a mapping of the parish as will show the relationships of each family to local religious institutions together with a continuous and cumulative study of the social, moral and economic forces of the community, with a view to constant adaptation of program to need.

Cooperation

45. Cooperation with other churches of the community in a definite program for community betterment.
46. Cooperation with state and county interdenominational religious agencies.
47. Cooperation with local community organizations.
48. Cooperation with county, state or national welfare agencies.
49. Cooperation with local and county agricultural agencies.
50. Cooperation with denominational boards.



- TOWN CHURCHES — RESIDENT PASTORS
- ◉ " " NON-RESIDENT PASTORS
- CITY CHURCHES — RESIDENT PASTORS
- + COUNTRY CHURCHES — RESIDENT PASTORS
- ⊕ " " NON-RESIDENT PASTORS

Fig. 1.— The distribution of all open county, town and city churches in South Dakota.