
Mission to the Cheyennes

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Mission to the Churches

BOARD OF MISSIONS, GENERAL CONFERENCE MENNONITE CHURCH

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C H E Y E N N E I N D I A N S !

Do they make you think of warbonnets and painted braves, visions of war whoops and scalp locks, tepees in a circle with smoke curling upward, women busy about their work of tanning hides and curing meat?

It shouldn't! The name Indians should no more bring such thoughts than speaking of other Americans brings visions of buckskin shirts, flintlock guns, or covered wagon trains.

Feather and braids and moccasins may still be here, but permanents and lipstick are probably more common. Food comes from a grocery cart, not from the thundering herd. The horse and spur are still evidence, but so are the Ford and Chevrolet.

Some Cheyennes are more bothered about how to pay the electric bill than how to start a camp fire. Children will probably be watching TV rather than playing bows and arrows.

T H E P A S T

And yet the past is not so far distant. How could it be when in the memory of living people General Custer and his men met their appointed end in the dust and sagebrush of the hills by the Little Bighorn that June day of 1876?

Custer! How could a man have ended otherwise who broke his promise, who smoked the pipe of peace and then attacked, without warning, a peaceful village?

How would you feel if it was your mother who carried all her life the bullet she received in her back while fleeing through the river from the cowardly attack? Yes, some bitterness lingers on.

The rapid monotonous beat of a small iron kettle drum, accompanying a singer with his gourd rattle, marks the all night gathering of the "Peyote Eaters." Seeming to come from the past, this religion was actually borrowed quite recently from other tribes and has acquired a veneer of Christianity.

Organized as the Native American Church and now a power in tribal politics, it claims to use peyote (top of a small southwestern cactus) as a sacrament in imitation of the bread and cup of the followers of Christ.

The closeness of the past is also seen in the educated young man who takes time off from his job and with painted body and eagle-bone whistle joins others in the ancient ritual of the Sun Dance. Days of fasting, dancing, and ceremony are to bring blessing to him and the tribe.

T O D A Y

For some the line between the Cheyenne and the white man has become blurred through intermarriage. Many of these have laid aside the Cheyenne language and much of Cheyenne

culture. But for many the Cheyenne tongue still speaks to the heart and though outwardly there are many marks of the acceptance of the white man's way, custom and thought differ.

In some lives a new bitterness has grown. "Is it a good house? Must be a white man's horse! Want to sell your land? Go and see the white man and then wait and wait. Can you do this?" No, I'm not a white man. "Son, what will you be someday?" "I don't know."

Perhaps it is not strange that many turn to the "white man's water,"--that bottle of temporary forgetfulness and ultimate heartache--liquor.

Some have found lives of work and usefulness here in the wooded hills and cultivated valleys of the reservation. But there is not enough work for all.

No, Cheyennes do not have to stay on the reservation. They do not receive a government dole, apart from relief for times of need.

But after years of isolation and of feeling incapable, it is not easy to leave home and friends and relatives to go out to compete with the white man on his own terms--not even if the government does offer help to find a job in the big city and support to get started.

Home may be a one-room log house and it may be hard to make ends meet. Yet the security of a familiar way of life, home, friends, and relatives is better than the uncertainty, rush, loneliness, and fierce competition of the city even if it brings big money.

And yet some have successfully met the competition of life "outside." As laborers, accountants, factory workers, nurses, teachers, and in other ways they are accepting a place in the main stream of American life.

T H E W O R D

In the early days broken promises, treachery, and greed must have seemed to the Cheyennes to be the very character of the white man. But there came others who brought the news of the God of love who would make men brothers through faith in His Son.

It was the General Conference Mennonite Church, established in response to a renewed vision of the church's responsibility to preach the gospel, that sought to bring the word of God to the Cheyennes in Indian Territory in 1880.

But how could that be done when one's words were not understood and the soft Cheyenne tongue slipped, without meaning, by one's ear? A written language was needed followed by translations. This was the great life work of Dr. Rodolphe Petter. Not only the New Testament, but songs, Old Testament portions, and other material have led to transformed lives which are the memorial to his life of service.

B U S B Y 1 9 0 4

William Bent with his Cheyenne bride set up a trading post and fort in eastern Colorado in 1832. Relatives and other Cheyennes were attracted to the area and this contributed to the division of the tribe into Northern and Southern groups.

Today about half of the tribe lives in central Oklahoma and about half on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in southern Montana.

Amazement crossed Cheyenne faces when their own words came from the mouth of the white man. It was 1878 when Dr. Rodolphe Petter was making his first visit to the Northern Cheyenne after living with the Southern Cheyenne for seven years. A number listened thoughtfully to his message and Vohokass, a young chief said, "Could you not dwell with us and tell us this message of God in Cheyenne?"

In 1904 a wagon creaked over the hills and down into the valley of Rosebud Creek bringing G. A. Linscheid to start the planting of the church at Busby. Pitching his tent in a grassy spot, he was soon busy building a home and log church.

Faithful workers have continued the witness. Among them were Alfred Wiebe, P. A. Kliewer, Rodolphe Petter, Valdo Petter, and Alfred Habegger.

By 1908 another log chapel was inviting the Cheyennes of Lame Deer to hear the word of God in their own tongue. Birney was occupied in 1910 and several years later, Ashland. Through the years many have heeded the call and become followers of Jesus Christ.

T H E C H U R C H

Would you like to join us for a service in Petter Memorial Mennonite Church of Lame Deer? First we will find a Sunday school class for you to visit. Your teacher may be a Cheyenne Christian or one of the white people who also worship here.

As you look around after Sunday school a few blankets and perhaps some braids catch your eye. The register on the wall indicates that last week the Sunday school attendance was 62 and the church 51. The offering was \$18.29.

Glancing at the bulletin you note that John Standsintimber is bringing the Cheyenne message this morning and that the English message will be given by the missionary. James Shoulderblade is in charge of the evening service.

You also note that there will be children's meetings at 'The Cabin' on Tuesday at 3:00 and 3:30. A Cheyenne prayer meeting led by Julia Shoulderblade will be held on Wednesday evening and Women's Christian Service will gather on Thursday at 2:00. Youth Fellowship will meet on Monday and the following Monday the Church Council will meet.

The report of a church business meeting indicates that Joe Walksalong has been given an official call to become full-time pastor of the church for the next year.

Since you find the Cheyenne a bit hard to understand, when it is time for the message you join the group that moves to the fellowship room to listen to the English. After the service you linger to meet your new friends and brothers and sisters in Christ.

The church at Lame Deer is the largest and most advanced in local leadership. Groups at Busby, Birney, and Ashland are smaller and the work is still much more in the hands of the missionary. The weekly program varies at each place.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Summer Bible Schools are aimed at children and youth while a Winter Bible School seeks to give special training to adult Christians.

The four churches often share in evangelistic meetings and in a Summer Camp Meeting and a Youth Bible Camp.

Youth seeking training in Christian schools have been aided with scholarship funds and others have been helped to find Christian homes in which to live while attending school.

Liquor-orphaned children and others in special need have been given a foster-home care by Laura Petter and the Daniel Schirmers.

For two years a community recreation center was directed by I-W man, Lyman Mueller.

COMPETING WITNESSES

The Cheyennes are beginning to feel the confusion brought on by many cross winds of doctrine.

The Catholic Church has been laboring here for years. Early efforts centered at Ashland where they have a large boarding school. A nation-wide mail appeal is now bringing in funds to rebuild and make more effective the St. Labre Mission School.

A pentecostal movement began about 1954 and later split into an Independent Pentecostal Church and one supported by the Pentecostal Church of God with a missionary at Lame Deer. In recent years, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Southern Baptists have carried on sporadic activity.

NOW WHAT

It has been more than fifty years since this work has started. What are the needs of today? Leadership is beginning to develop. Sunday school teachers are being trained. Some of the services are conducted by Cheyenne Christians.

Joined together in "The United Cheyenne Churches," the four groups of believers are now members of the Northern District Conference and the General Conference Mennonite Church. An executive committee helps plan local co-operative efforts such as camp meetings, evangelistic services, Bible camps and is more and more entering into the administration of the Lord's work here.

Yet there is room for growth. Many of the older Christians cannot read. Others have compromised their stand for Christ. Liquor is proving a powerful enemy. Only now are young people beginning to finish high school and go on for further training. A very few have had special schooling for Christian service.

Still the time must soon come when the missionary is no longer leading this work, but sharing it as a brother. More than that, the missionary must finally go and the church among the Cheyennes be established as a fully participating member of the wider Christian fellowship, witnessing at home, fellowshiping with other Mennonite Churches, and sharing in the worldwide outreach of the gospel.

In this wider fellowship the Indian Christian must not be a museum piece, a curiosity, or a foreigner. He must be welcomed simply as a beloved brother in Christ and a fellow laborer in the gospel.

W H A T C A N Y O U D O ?

Are you open to the call of God? It may be that He needs your life for service as a missionary. Or it may be that He has other ways of using your life.

Are you a young person just out of high school? Join other like minded youth in the Voluntary Service Unit this summer. Get a first hand picture of things here and give weeks of needed service.

Are you older? Perhaps Winter Voluntary Service is God's place for you.

Are you a teacher? Consider a teaching position here or in other Indian areas where your witness can count in a needy and difficult place.

A doctor or a nurse? The Public Health Service has positions in Indian Hospitals or Clinics where your service and testimony can count for Christ.

A business man? Have you considered locating in one of these small communities where in addition to your witness for the Lord you may provide work opportunities for these people?

Are you trained in forestry, agriculture, accounting, or social work? The Bureau of Indian Affairs or other agency may have an opening for you where you could also do much for Christ.

Are you a contractor or architect? Something needs to be done about housing here. Do you have some ideas?

You can't leave home? Some Cheyenne young people are willing to live in Christian homes while they are attending school. In some cases there is need for foster home care for a needy child.

You can't help in any of the above ways? You can pray. Only the Lord through the Holy Spirit can give new life. Only He can transform character. Only He can change bitterness, resentment, hate, prejudice, and superiority into brotherly love.

You can be a channel for His word and His love. There are strangers in your community of other races or of your own who, through your life and love and witness, can become "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

Write to the Board of Missions, 722 Main Street, Newton, Kansas or to one of the mission staff for further information.

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE NORTHERN CHEYENNES

The following statistical information is from the Social and Economic Study of the Cheyenne Reservation, 1950 and Preliminary Report: The Northern Cheyenne Reservation, 1959.

<u>Population</u>	1950	1960
Enrolled members of the Northern Cheyenne		
Tribe 60% full blood	1,966	2,325
Members living on the reservation	1,717	1,575
Members living elsewhere	249	750
Nonenrolled Indians on reservation	97	276
Non-Indians on reservation	60	175
Total population of reservation	1,864	2,026

Land

Area of Northern Cheyenne Reservation	445,140 cares
Grazing area: 38% used by Cheyennes	
with 5,600 cattle 62% leased to non-Indians	403,736 acres
Farm-pasture leases	13,045 acres
Forest Land 205 million board feet of merchantable timber	74,000 acres
Land in nontrust, fee patent status (sold or saleable to non-Indians)	11,663 acres

Income (Average per family)

	1950	1959	%1959
Lease rentals	\$63	\$271	12.8%
Timber sales	0	12	.6%
Welfare	359	685	32.3%
Annuities, pensions, etc.	0	175	8.2%
Crops	88	75	3.5%
Livestock production	197	280	13.2%
Wages	429	625	29.4%
Totals	1,136	2,123	100%

One fifth of the families are self-supporting. About one half of the families have some wage income much of which is seasonal.

Employment opportunities are found with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Public Health Service, tribal government, the schools, merchants, timber harvest, coal mine, Catholic Mission, and seasonal work on nearby ranches and farms.

Housing

2/3 of homes are of log construction
 1/2 have one room only
 1/5 have electricity
 a very few have water piped in
 6.5 persons is average occupancy

Welfare Services 1959

County and State	\$150,000	68% federal 32% state funds
Federal	66,257	General assistance, burials, child welfare
Surplus commodities	50,000 lbs (\$8,500 value)	distributed in 3 months prior to report

Expense of Government Services 1959 fiscal year

\$1,400,000:	83% federal funds	37% for education
	11% state and county	20% for welfare
	6% local tribal funds	14% for health services

Education

In six years prior to 1950, 21 Cheyennes graduated from high school. In 1960 about that number graduated and several went on for vocational or college training.

Public Law 959 provides vocational training for Indians between 18 and 35. Three Cheyennes have completed such training. Two are attending school and about 20 have applied for future admission.

School population on reservation in 1950 was 448. In 1960 it was 790.

Quotes

"This group is more essentially Indian in culture and behavior than any other group in the Missiori River Basin."

"The reservation accomplished what the soldiers were unable to do, defeat the Cheyennes."
 (Charles Rightmire in Billings Gazette.)

MISSION STAFF 1961

Laura Petter
 Donavin and June Diller
 Malcolm and Esther Wenger
 Daniel and Amy Schirmer

Ashland, Montana
 Lame Deer, Montana (Furlough 1961-63)
 Busby, Montana (Furlough 1961-62)
 (On Furlough 1960-61)

UNITED CHEYENNE CHURCHES

Statistics for fiscal year October 1959 to September 1960

	<u>Average Attendance</u>		Local	<u>Income Received¹</u>	
	Sunday School	Morning Worship		Board of Missions	Total
Ashland Mennonite		16	\$12	\$833 ²	\$845
Birney Mennonite	17	17	34	546	580
Bethany Mennonite, Busby	34	25	689	484	1,173
Petter Memorial Mennonite, Lame Deer	67	51	1,231	466	1,697
Lame Deer Community Center			431	249	680
Student Aid Program				418	418
Totals	118	109	\$2,397	\$2,996	\$5,393

¹ Does not include missionary salary or auto expense² \$150 of this amount for foster home care of children

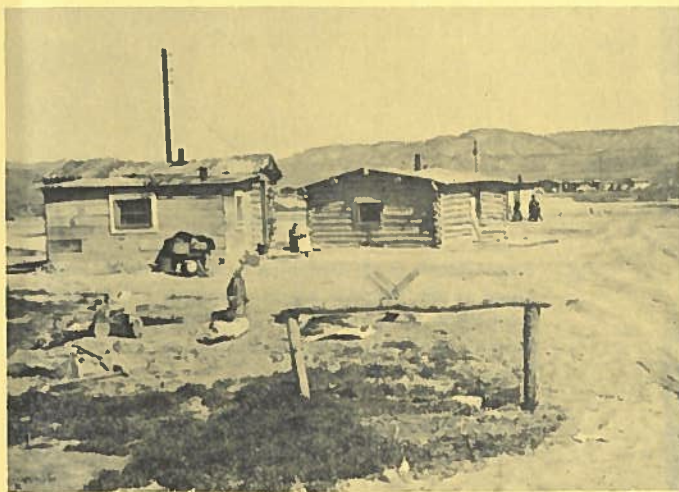
WORKERS IN THE PAST

Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Linscheid	1904-1920*
Miss Agnes Williams	1905-1960*
Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Kliever	1908-1924*
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wiebe	1911-1915* 1921-1922
Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Neufeld	1913-1916
Mr. Rodolphe Petter	1916-1947d
Mrs. Rodolphe Petter	1916-1949 living at Lame Deer
Mr. Alfred Habegger	1918-1956d
Mrs. Alfred Habegger	1918-1957
Mr. and Mrs. Otto Pankratz	1923-1926
Mr. Valdo Petter	1924-1935d
Mrs. Valdo Petter	1924-
Miss Marie Buller	1941-1942
Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Wenger	1944-
Mr. and Mrs. David Habegger	1949-1951
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Schirmer	1950- **
Mr. and Mrs. Donavin Diller	1957-

* Also served on Oklahoma Mission field

** Also served in Arizona Mission field

Revised, March 1961



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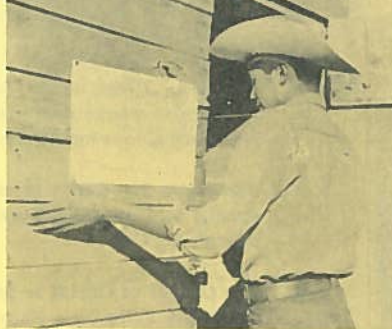


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1. A typical village on the Tongue Indian Reservation in Montana where our mission works with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.
2. The pagan Sun Dance is still observed today and speaks in drumming tones of the soul's restless search for God.
3. The Gospel of Christ is proclaimed to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe by a Cheyenne pastor. Ike Shoulderblade is the assistant at our Ashland station.
4. This group of Northern Cheyenne preachers gathered with Homer Hart of the Southern Cheyenne Tribe of Oklahoma are left to right: James Shoulderblade, Ike Shoulderblade, James McLane, Homer Hart, James Atwood, Stamper White, and John Standsin Timber.
5. Joe Walksalong is the latest addition to the ministerial staff, taking the pastorate of the Lame Deer church in June, 1961. He is pictured here with his wife, Victoria, and their child.
6. Cheyenne laymen serve also. Fred Whitewolf is the present church treasurer at Lame Deer. He is shown here with his family.



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7. Reaching out for the church, Raymond Littlebear nails up a Sunday School poster.

8. Eager faces of Cheyenne children present a challenge at the Tuesday afternoon children's meeting held in the Lane Deer Bible Story Cabin. Mission money goes to supply literature and filmstrips for this type of meeting.

9. A Bible School class at Busby with summer V.S. worker Erna Dyck teaching.

10. Praises to the Lord are sung by the Cherub Choir at Lane Deer.

11. Special music in church is often given by Eddie Sandcrane of Busby and Maurice Limberhand of Lane Deer.

12. This Cheyenne women's meeting demonstrates again the fact that the Christian church offers opportunities for fellowship and service to all members of the family. Mrs. Don Diller is in charge of this group.



11



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