

A Letter from the South Canaan MP Church

by J.F. Lennon, 1915

Methodist Protestant Church
South Canaan, Pennsylvania
Rev. J.F. Lennon¹, Pastor

Rev. W. M. Nesbit²

December 28, 1915

My dear Brother,

Now that the Christmas rush is over, I thought I would drop you a line and let you know I was still in Pennsylvania – though in Spirit I fear I am sometimes very far from here. And now that winter has set in with its short days and long nights, snow, ice, etc. – I often long not for “green pastures,” but for the “sidewalks of New York.” However I am here till next October³, so I must be content – but a letter from friends is a great consolation.

Both my churches⁴ are doing well as could be expected. I have been trying this year to introduce the duplex envelope system, but as yet it has not been very much of a success. Finance is our greatest trouble – but I guess that is so most everywhere. To begin with, the salary is very small – and when it runs from two to three months behind it makes it still worse. But they do finally pay up, for which I am thankful – and how. Excuse the complaints. I should not have written them.

Do you happen to know of any cheap book of good illustrative stories? I often have trouble for illustrations. What is a good magazine for a preacher? I have a sample copy of the “Homiletic Review”⁵ and would like to get it regularly, but the price is a little too large for my pocket book just now. Perhaps you know of a cheaper one.

Little William⁶ is getting along fine, but his mother says he is the most troublesome baby of all. But I must say he is very good natured and generally when he does give us one of his nocturnal entertainments it is fun and laughter, and not crying.

Mrs. Lennon⁷ wishes to be remembered to you and your mother, and joins me in wishing you both and the friends at Ferry⁸ “A very Happy New year.”

How about our church letters – also recommendations from quarterly conference.⁹ Write soon.

Yours sincerely,
J.F. Lennon¹⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ In 1915, John F. Lennon was 45 years old and preparing for ordination in the Methodist Protestant Church. His previous occupation or circumstances have not been determined with certainty, but it is believed he was the editor and proprietor of the *Roselle Star* (a weekly newspaper in Roselle NJ) in 1901. In 1914 he was recommended for the ministry by the Kearny NJ quarterly conference, approved for employment by the appropriate conference committee, and assigned to South Canaan in 1914. In 1915 he was re-assigned to South Canaan and formally enrolled in the first year of study. In 1916 he was moved to the second year of study.

² William Marsiglia Nesbit (1881-1950) was born in New York City. He graduated from Columbia University in 1902 and from Drew Theological Seminary in 1905. In 1912 he earned a PhD from Columbia University. He served in the New York, Wilmington and New York East Conferences. The connection between John F. Lennon and William M. Nesbit has not been determined, but there is one interesting possibility: Lennon was recommended by the Kearny NJ MP class, and Nesbit pastored in adjacent Jersey City (1906-08) [and nearby Westwood (1908-09) and Basking Ridge (1909-13)]. It is possible (and even likely, considering the tone of the letter) that Nesbit may have been one who encouraged Lennon to consider his change of vocation into the ministry.

³ The annual sessions of the Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church were held in October. The journal for the October 1916 session lists J.F. Lennon as returning to South Canaan, but it also lists him as a student for the ministry living in Oceanville NJ. It appears that he was re-assigned, and that Oceanville NJ is his permanent address.

⁴ The two churches on the charge were South Canaan and Varden, histories of which may be found in "The Final Fifteen" article in this volume of *The Chronicle*.

⁵ *The Homiletic Review* was a monthly "international magazine of religion, theology, and philosophy" that "treats every phase of the minister's work." It was published by Funk and Wagnalls and was non-denominational.

⁶ William was the third (and last) child born to John F. and Martha Lennon. Their previous children were John and Martha – but with different middle names than the parents.

⁷ Mrs. Lennon was the former Martha Dupre. She was born in Ireland and married John F. Lennon December 1, 1909. He was 39 at the time, and she was 20.

⁸ W.M. Nesbit had been serving Ferry ME Church in East Orange NJ since March 1913.

⁹ J.F. Lennon was still "in process" toward ordination and was reminding Dr. Marsiglia of documentation he needed from New Jersey relative to this process.

¹⁰ John Francis Lennon (1870-1932) was born in New Brunswick NJ. On credentials from the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, he was admitted into the New Jersey Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1920 and served the following charges. Greenville circuit, Manahawkin & Cedar Run, Forked River & Lanoka, Sea Isle City, Bridgeboro & Asbury, Bridgeport & Center Square. John F. Lennon died while serving Bridgeport & Center Square and is buried in the Bridgeport Cemetery. When he died in 1932, his son John was a student at Drew University preparing for the ministry. John Robert Lennon (1911-1986) was appointed to fill the remainder of the conference year at his father's church, and he went on to have a distinguished career in New Jersey, New York, Minnesota and East Ohio Conferences.

St Nicholas of South Canaan Orthodox Church was one of the first to receive the three year mission planting grant from the National Church. Though Orthodoxy has a long history in Montana, including a parish consecrated by St Tikhon and served by Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich in Butte, it has been inconsistent until the reception of the grant. The mission completed the grant in September 1997. The Serbian Diocese founded St Elijah Serbian Orthodox Church in Billings a number of years ago under the pastorship of His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI (Soraich) (now closed). Following some internal problems, a new parish was formed in 1988, St Nicholas of Myra under the Greek Archdiocese, who administered the area on a monthly basis for seven years. 'The Waking': copyright 1953 by Theodore Roethke from THE COLLECTED POEMS OF THEODORE ROETHKE printed by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc. THE DESTRUCTION OF DRESDEN by David Irving: From the Introduction by Ira C. Eaker, Lt. Gen. USAF (RET.) and Foreword by Air Marshall Sir Robert Saundby. The congregation of the Canaan Baptist Church, primarily African-American, was organized in 1913 by Rev. David Boles, Sr., who was pastor, and Brother Fred Gilbert, Deacon. (A historical marker located in Richmond Hill in Bryan County, Georgia.) Richmond Hill in Bryan County, Georgia The American South (South Atlantic). Canaan Church. By David Seibert, September 26, 2012. 1. Canaan Church Marker. It was the only organized denominational church in what is now Richmond Hill during the early 20th century. The present sanctuary was built with support from Henry Ford. Many of the original congregants of the church were descendants of the antebellum rice plantation slaves of nearby Cherry Hill and Silk Hope plantations. Erected 2012 by Coastal Bryan Heritage Trail.