

**A HANDBOOK OF THE
COMMUNITY
CHURCH MOVEMENT IN
THE UNITED STATES**

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A Handbook of the Community Church Movement in the United States by David R. Piper

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— of —
the Community Church Movement
in the United States

Compiled and Edited by
DAVID R. PIPER
Editor, *The Community Churchman*

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COMPILER'S PREFACE

The value of a Handbook lies not in its size but in its accuracy. This little book gives statistics which have been compiled at considerable expense and much painstaking labor; checking and rechecking, revising and eliminating, have been necessary in order to uncover and present facts, free from error.

No actual data of any consequence existed when the work began in January 1921, except a few bare lists of union churches gathered by State Federations for their own States. Although several of these State lists were generously furnished as a beginning from which we might work, the compiling of the country-wide list of some 700 churches was itself a time-consuming undertaking. Then followed the gathering of detailed information by means of questionnaires to the churches and pastors, personal correspondence, and some field work.

The statistics here published are acknowledged to be incomplete, but they are the most nearly complete thus far published, and they err safely and conservatively on the side of under-statement. The movement itself is much larger than indicated by the figures.

The chief purpose of this Handbook is to describe the community church movement, not as some one thinks it should be or will be, but as it actually is; to tell what a community church is, judged by the study of all types of such churches as they operate at their present stage of development; to describe their methods of organization, their special community-serving activities, and to give to the reader reliable data by which he may judge for himself of the success and importance of the movement.

CHAPTER I
WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CHURCH?

In attempting to define the "Community Church" one is beset with the usual difficulties met in defining a living organism or a growing movement. This difficulty is somewhat increased by the fact that community churches are of many varieties. The only method of procedure therefore, is the inductive. And in making use of this method, studying all types of community churches, two things become clear: First, that the community churches of all types represent the attempt of the Christian people of hundreds of communities to apply the principles of democracy and the spirit of unity to religious organization; Second, that in doing this they have found it necessary to break down or reach across old sectarian lines of cleavage, which in the past have divided Christian people in the same community. They have also, in applying the spirit of unity, been compelled to seek a uniting principle outside of creed and ritual.

In overcoming sectarian barriers they have all worked out or worked toward the principle of making the community and not the