

THE GATHERING OF THE GC.
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Our last mimeographed message to you told of our having heard the California Call and our feeling fortunate that we had found a perch on which to land less than one hundred miles from three grandchildren (GC)

During the last half of 1952 the remaining five GC and their parents have heard, and heeded, the call that has brought millions of others to this state during the past few years.

Perhaps we should explain to some of you that Patricia Anne Ratcliffe is the new addition which brings the number of GC up to eight. She arrived last May in New England but hearing the call of the west she persuaded (perhaps) her family to share their new treasure with Grandma and Grandpa. They are now settled in San Mateo, about ninety miles south of Guerneville and have visited us once. We have been there three times. We ate a delicious Thanksgiving dinner there two days late but the delay enabled us to celebrate Jenny Robinson's fourth birthday, who was there with her family. Six GC with their parents, a Thanksgiving dinner and a birthday party, all in California, made Grandma and Grandpa feel that they are about as near heaven as they care to be at present.

There was one fly in the, what shall I say, soup? that day in San Mateo: two of the GC and their parents were not with us, but they were in California, having reached Oceanside the night before, after driving across the continent and getting held up in a snow storm in Texas. They heard the California Call via the US Navy and James has been assigned to the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton. The last we heard they were living in a Hotel until they could get into an apartment which they had rented. We are delighted to know that they hope to visit us around Christmas, so for the first time we can all be together. Grandma and Grandpa hope to be able to make a trip to Oceanside and the surrounding country early in February when we shall have completed our first year in Guerneville.

To complete the GC record we should add that our youngest grandson, Tommy Robinson, gave us a bad fright a few weeks ago by landing in a San Francisco hospital with a case of polio. Fortunately his doctor Daddy recognized the symptoms at an early stage and the splendid medical care he received prevented any paralysis. He romped and ran with the rest of the GC in San Mateo and that was a real cause for Thanksgiving.

CONCERNING CALIFORNIA CHURCHES.

One of the advantages of being called to a small church is that it is easier to get away occasionally than if you were tied to a larger institution. We have had some wonderful excursions since we came to Guerneville, the first being to the Pastoral Conference last February, which is an annual affair at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley and was attended this year by more than 1,000 ministers and their wives. In addition to the fine fellowship with many friends, it was an inspiration to listen to such men as Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Dr. Albright of Johns Hopkins. A few months later we attended the State Conference of Congregational Churches in Oakland and that was a wonderful experience. The Schomars of France and Dr. Sidney Barry of London made a remarkable team.

Last June we drove to Claremont for the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches, - a never-to-be-forgotten experience. We managed to get to Long Beach for a few hours visit with friends and spent a night with Mary's only brother and his wife who live eighty miles south of Claremont.

Dec. 5 I attended the farewell dinner in Oakland for Dr. Harley Gill who is retiring as Superintendent of Northern California Conference of Congregational Christian Churches. It was a great meeting for a great man who has done a great job in this great state. (How's that for a conservative Vermonter?)

My chronology is getting mixed up a bit but I want to mention an enjoyable time we had at a Family Camp last summer at Cazadero, where we conducted some talks and discussions on mission work. Cazadero is the Congregational Camp of 800 acres on a wooded mountainside twenty miles from here where many conferences camps and other good times are held. After the Family Camp I was there for a short time during the College Student Conference and in December a group of Congregational ministers had a unique Retreat there. It was conducted by an Episcopalian Dr. Charles Whiston who, formerly a missionary in China, now teaches in the Epis-

copal Theological School in Berkeley and is a specialist in conducting retreats of prayer and meditation. Most of the time was spent in silence but Dr. Whiston spoke to us for about an hour three or four times a day and read some little Plays of Saint Francis while we ate. The plays are gems and if laughter is good for digestion we had it in large doses. The unique part of the Retreat was the Silence. Imagine 12 Congregational ministers being together for thirty-six hours without speaking! I can't refrain from reporting that Dr. Whiston told us that he once had such a Retreat with 125 women. If any of you have a chance to attend one of his Retreats by all means do so. Not only did we not speak, neither did we read.

THE GUERNEVILLE CHURCH

If you feel like asking "Don't you give any time to your own church?" The answer is "Yes". I have missed only two Sundays since February 1st and in addition to a Church School class of Junior High boys and Girls, the Sunday morning service, a mid-week Bible Class there have been many committee meetings, calls, weddings and funerals. The church hasn't burst any seams because of large crowds but the faithful members who keep the church going are influential in the town and a much larger group are with us in spirit. even if their bodily presence is seldom seen in church. Just now we are in the midst of our Every Member Canvass and when that is ended I shall feel that my first examination is over. Whether I have done "passing work" will show up on the declaration cards. We have in our 1953 budget an item for Our Christian World Mission and another item for the Church Building Loan Fund. I hope that they can be kept there after the annual meeting in January when we adopt the working budget for the year on the basis of what we get pledged this week.

The Minister's wife is doing all right, except that her physical strength is inadequate at times. Let her tell you about the Parsonage.

One of the joys of living in Guerneville is the comfortable little Parsonage, set high on a hill, where we have been able to entertain friends from near and far. Then our study-guest room is not large enough, nearby is the beautiful Armstrong Redwood State Park with camping space and wonderful picnic grounds. We have had Honolulu friends, guests enroute to Japan, friends from China, six GC with their parents and one grandmother.

We should love to have more of our friends come during 1953. There are beautiful canyon roads around Guerneville, leading to historic places of interest and spots of scenic beauty. There is the Rushing River, which at the moment deserves the name which Stephen Ratcliffe gave it last summer. It is fun to follow it to the sea. Let us show you our town and our church and introduce some of our good friends.

CALIFORNIA CHRISTMAS.

As we write this (Dec. 11) the sun is shining, the ground is green with the grass which recently started to grow, and there are rosebuds in our yard which have not yet been killed by frost. It is hard, under such circumstances, to realize that Christmas is only two weeks away. If this reaches you after December 25th let it be evidence that Grandma and Grandpa are having to slow down a bit while the stream of events in which they live rushes on like the river at their feet. Whether this finds you in similar scenes, or buried in the beauty of winter's snow, may "God bless us every one".

* To be interpreted as conservative New England, not California colloquial.

Harold and Mary Robinson.