

WASHINGTON

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General Pershing—Influenza and the Churches— A Gold Star

GENERAL PERSHING, in reply to the cablegram sent him by the General War-Time Commission of the Churches, assembled in conference here last week, sends this message: "We rely on the Churches at home to keep the spirit of the people white-hot with patriotism and courage until victory has been won."

THE INFLUENZA has become epidemic in Washington, but not yet on such a scale as in other cities. Every effort is being made to prevent its gaining further headway. To lessen the chances of spreading the disease Commissioner Brownlow of the health department has ordered closed all public schools, moving picture houses, theaters, and churches. Public meetings to promote the Fourth Liberty Loan have been abandoned, and entertainments under the auspices of the War Camp Community Service have been indefinitely postponed. The Walter Reed Army Hospital is under strict quarantine, as also are nearby camps. Thinning of the crowds in the street cars has been attempted by "staggering" the hours of opening the government offices, some departments opening as early as 7:30 in the morning, others as late as 9 o'clock. All department stores open at 10. Many of the churches attempted to hold open-air services in the grounds, or in parks nearby, but heavy showers interrupted most of these, so that on Sunday the city was strangely quiet, with few people on the streets, and no motor vehicles in evidence, in marked contrast to the turmoil of the streets during the week. Open-air services will be held next Sunday if the weather permits.

THE FOLLOWING resolution, offered by the Rev. Dr. R. H. McKim, was unanimously adopted at a meeting of the Washington Pastors' Federation on October 7th:

"RESOLVED, That in the opinion of this body, it is contrary to public policy to close our churches because of the epidemic of influenza.

"We hold it to be of vital importance that our moral and spiritual dynamos should be kept running at full power. But closing our churches means a serious loss of moral and spiritual power.

"No one will deny that to close the government departments would be out of the question, except in the last resort, notwithstanding the fact that they are veritable hotbeds of the influenza. But it is just as contrary to public policy to close the churches, and thereby weaken the spiritual power of the country. Spiritual force is even more necessary for victory than shot and shell and ships and cannon and aeroplanes.

"This opinion is emphasized by the fact, which, in the opinion of competent medical

men, can not be questioned, that the danger from the opening of the churches, if it exists at all, is infinitesimal in comparison with that which results from keeping open the government departments. The latter are crowded; the hours are long; the air space is often small; the atmosphere often becomes vitiated. Whereas the churches are generally commodious and comparatively well ventilated; there is no crowding and the hours are short.

"We hold, further, that in these times of trial and affliction, it is a serious thing to deprive the people of the comfort and consolation they derive from the services of the Church. It distinctly impairs the *morale* of the community, the preservation of which at a high level is so vitally important for the winning of the war.

"During the yellow fever epidemic in the Southwest, many years ago, the churches continued their services with entire regularity, to the great comfort of the stricken city.

"For these reasons we respectfully ask the commissioners to withdraw the request for the closing of the churches."

FOURTEEN MEN of the Church of the Ascension have organized a war unit league, the purpose of which is to give advice and aid during the period of the war to dependents of soldiers and other war workers connected with the parish, and to the young women and men newcomers to the city, and to aid also in the upkeep of the Church property and grounds. It is to be known as the Ascension League.

THE FIRST gold star on the service flag of Epiphany parish denotes the death of Lieut. J. Wilder Tomlinson, at Brooke Aviation Field, Texas, in an aeroplane accident, September 11th. Lieut. Tomlinson had been brought up in the parish and was a communicant. His captain writes of him to his parents: "His career at ground school and at flying school was a matter of keen interest to me. . . . The air service is proud of Wilder. He was a true crusader, and it is such as he who will force the barbaric host across the water to their very knees in supplication."