

SPIRITUALISTS

GENERAL STATEMENT

In 1906 the only organized Spiritualist body was the National Spiritualist Association. It was claimed by this association and by others that there were numbers of individuals, and even of small communities, that were not included in its enrollment, and later a new body was formed under the name "Progressive Spiritual Church." In 1913 another group was formed, the National Spiritual Alliance, holding doctrines so similar to the two older bodies that it has seemed appropriate to combine them all under one head. A general review of the history and doctrine of the Spiritualists as a religious body is given in connection with the older body.

The principal statistics as reported for 1926, 1916, and 1906, so far as available, are given below:

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE SPIRITUALIST BODIES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1926								
Total for the group	611	50,631	94	\$1,384,156	509	\$531,508	92	5,552
National Spiritualist Association.....	543	41,233	86	1,307,356	463	475,842	86	5,412
Progressive Spiritual Church.....	9	7,383	3	32,800	9	28,469	1	46
National Spiritual Alliance of the United States of America.....	59	2,015	5	44,000	37	27,197	5	94
1916								
Total for the group	354	29,028	78	492,455	289	195,682	76	3,230
National Spiritualist Association.....	343	23,197	75	440,955	278	173,048	75	3,180
Progressive Spiritual Church.....	11	5,831	3	51,500	11	22,634	1	50
1906								
Total for the group	454	35,056	100	958,048			75	2,699
National Spiritualist Association.....	454	35,056	100	958,048			75	2,699

PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL CHURCH

STATISTICS

The data given for the Progressive Spiritual Church for 1926 represent 9 active organizations, all reported as being in urban territory. The total membership was 7,383, comprising 2,996 males and 4,387 females, all of whom were over 13 years of age. There was no debt reported on the church edifices, and there were no parsonages.

The membership in the Progressive Spiritual Church includes those persons who have fully subscribed to all the beliefs of the church.

Comparative data, 1926 and 1916.—Table 1 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926 and 1916.

TABLE 1.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1926 AND 1916: PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL CHURCH

ITEM	1926	1916
Churches (local organizations)	9	11
Increase ¹ over preceding census:		
Number.....	-2
Per cent ²
Members	7,383	5,831
Increase over preceding census:		
Number.....	1,552
Per cent.....	26.6
Average membership per church.....	820	530
Church edifices:		
Number.....	7	3
Value—Churches reporting.....	3	3
Amount reported.....	\$32,800	\$51,500
Average per church.....	\$10,933	\$17,167
Expenditures during year:		
Churches reporting.....	9	11
Amount reported.....	\$28,469	\$22,634
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$25,894	\$14,124
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$2,635	\$8,510
Average expenditure per church.....	\$3,163	\$2,058
Sunday schools:		
Churches reporting.....	1	1
Officers and teachers.....	10	14
Scholars.....	46	50

¹ A minus sign (—) denotes decrease.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State tables.—Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the statistics for the Progressive Spiritual Church by States. Table 2 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches and the total membership classified by sex. Table 3 gives for the State of Illinois, and for all other States in combination, the number and membership of the churches for the censuses of 1926 and 1916. Table 4 shows, for 1926 alone, the value of church property and the church expenditures, giving separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc., and also gives the data for Sunday schools. Separate presentation in Table 4 is limited to the State of Illinois, the only one in which three or more churches reported the principal items shown (values or expenditures), in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from this table can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 2.

TABLE 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL CHURCH

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	Number of churches	Number of members	MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
			Male	Female	Males per 100 females ¹
United States	9	7,383	2,996	4,387	68.3
East North Central:					
Ohio.....	1	334	141	193	73.1
Indiana.....	1	148	65	83	
Illinois.....	5	6,050	2,390	3,660	65.3
West South Central:					
Texas.....	1	500	200	300	66.7
Pacific:					
Washington.....	1	351	200	151	132.5

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, BY STATES, 1926 and 1916: PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL CHURCH

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926 or 1916]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES		NUMBER OF MEMBERS	
	1926	1916	1926	1916
United States	9	11	7,383	5,831
Illinois.....	5	4	6,050	5,448
Other States.....	4	7	1,333	383

TABLE 4.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, CHURCH EXPENDITURES, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926: PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL CHURCH

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting value of edifices and expenditures]

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR				SUNDAY SCHOOLS		
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States	9	7	3	\$32,800	9	\$28,469	\$25,834	\$2,635	1	10	46
Illinois.....	5	7	3	32,800	5	17,259	15,384	1,875	1	10	46
Other States.....	4				4	11,210	10,450	760			

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

The Progressive Spiritual Church was established to embrace the rapidly increasing number of individuals who had come to regard spirit communication not only as a scientifically demonstrated fact, but as a revelation no less divine in its origin than those recorded in the Holy Scriptures; and who believed that God did not cease His revelations 2,000 years ago, but that the increased facility of spirit communication of the present day is but a logical development in the spiritual evolution of the human race.

It was founded by Rev. G. V. Cordingley, who was one of the organizers of the Illinois State Spiritualist Association. He withdrew from that association because of their insistence upon adopting a "Declaration of Principles," rather than a "Confession of Faith," based upon the authority of the Holy Bible. He thereupon organized the Progressive Spiritual Church, at Chicago, with 200 members, and was granted a charter by the State of Illinois, March 5, 1907. This church now has branches established in various parts of the United States, and in Shanghai, China. Missionary activity at present is not devoted to individuals, but rather to the absorption of independent bodies of Spiritualists already organized. This policy has enabled the church to extend its organization in spite of its very limited financial resources.

The church was founded primarily to lift spiritualism above mere psychic research, to establish it upon a sound, religious basis, and to secure its recognition among other Christian denominations. It is therefore especially interested in preserving the worship and guarding against any encroachment thereon by legislative enactment; but it is just as anxious to promote legislation for the purpose of suppressing fraud, deception, fortune telling, and other nefarious activities practiced under the guise of spiritualism. It aspires to the redemption of spiritualism from the degradation of its false phases and is devoted to the organization of the multitudes who may find in these later revelations a broader creed than those of the older denominations.

DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

The doctrine of this church is, in general, that of conventional Christianity, modified by later divine revelations received in spirit communications. These revelations have confirmed many of the vital dogmas of the older creeds, such as immortality, the existence of superior beings or angels, and an ever-ascending hierarchy, in which the Christ spirit abides, culminating in that infinite exaltation with which is associated the idea of God. They have likewise illuminated many obscure and controversial matters of doctrine, more than any exegesis of speculative theologians has done, and have furnished a basis for the reconciliation of faith and reason. The product of these revelations has been incorporated in the Confession of Faith, which is in part, as follows:

We believe in the communion of Spirits; man's restoration to an everlasting life; the resurrection of the soul, not flesh; acknowledging God as Absolute Divine Spirit, whose voice and presence is always with us, and that of the Angels who are departed spirits who communicate and materialize with the living by means of mediums; manifesting by demonstration in origin and in phenomena all Biblical phases or reading, and the relation between God and Soul and between the soul and the body, and bridging the hitherto "impassable gulf" between the dead and the living.

¹This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Rev. G. V. Cordingley, pastor and founder, Progressive Spiritual Church and approved by him in its present form.

We believe that Jesus Christ was a medium, controlled by the Spirit of Elias and the Spirit of Moses and the Spirit of John the Baptist * * *, who after His death and resurrection materialized before His disciples * * *. That Moses communicated with the Divine Spirit, God. That the celebrated Nun of Kent received communications direct from God.

We believe that all these Spirits have desires; that the Spiritual body and the material body can commune together through the mouthpiece of another in harmony with the Spiritual; that through this channel we can receive the desires of the Spirit forces, concerning all human affairs; that we are obligated to these desires, and their fulfillment is pleasing to God.

We believe that the fingers of the hand of a medium under control can write and deliver divine messages and visions * * *. That a divine understanding of dreams can be had * * *. That God revealeth secrets that should be made known * * *. That the stars divine the pathway of life of every character * * *. That the rewards of divinations are in the hand of every character * * *. That the length of our days, riches, and honor are shown in the hands * * *.

We believe that Divine Metaphysics are designed by God, guiding the mind of the medium from the visible to the invisible, and that it is only through this channel that the cause of disease can be detected and overpowered. That God has a fixed law for the preservation of the Spiritual body until death itself shall die, and that a departed spirit can be relieved from this death through prayer to a higher state or sphere of Spirituality.

We acknowledge the Holy Bible to be the inspired word of God, a guide to Spirit life, and all phases of Spiritualism such as prophecies, spiritual palmistry, spiritual automatic writing, spiritual suggestions and radiations, spiritual materialization, spiritual trumpet speaking, spiritual healing by magnetized articles, spiritual levitation and spiritual tests * * *, and as so practiced was and is a real science. That it is present with us now and does not belong to a dispensation now ended. That when a person does not possess the necessary understanding of either of the above, a Teacher or Reader may be employed for compensation to explain and teach the Truth relating to these mental and spiritual thought forms as revealed to him or her through the Divine Spirit.

We believe that heaven and hell are conditions, not locations. That it is necessary that we hold personal communication with the spirits of the departed and their forces, to confess to them the renunciation of our material wills and intelligence that we may be properly guided in our daily life by messages received from the Spiritual realm according to the strength of our harmony with the spirits of the departed and their Spiritual love and desires. That it is necessary for us in consulting Spiritual mediums to place ourselves in harmony with such belief.

We believe that the change called death should be met without fear; that our sins stay with us forever; provided, that we have not lived in obedience to the law of spiritual harmony. That man is perfection, the image and likeness of God. That he exists independent of human will, controlled by the Spirit forces free from malicious magnetic elements.

The sacraments of baptism, marriage, spiritual communion, and funeral are observed and extended to all who become members of the church by subscribing to the "Confession of Faith."

Candidates for ordination to the ministry of this church may be of either sex, but must be of good moral character, well qualified in some phase of mediumship, and shall have successfully pursued a course of instruction in the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures in a seminary maintained by the church for that purpose.

The officers of this church consist of a supreme pastor, a board of trustees, a secretary, and a treasurer, elected by the congregation of the Mother Church. Branch churches elect their own officers, but are subject to the constitution and by-laws of the Mother Church.

The Progressive Spiritual Church is arranging by correspondence with other churches which follow the same line of thought for a "Convention of the Churches of Spiritualism," to be held at Chicago in 1933 in connection with the World's Fair. Churches in England, France, Germany, Canada, and Cuba have already signified their intention of taking part, and others in South America and the Orient are expected to join in the movement.