

LIBERAL CHURCH OF AMERICA

STATISTICS

The data given for 1926 represent 3 active organizations of the Liberal Church of America, all reported as being in urban territory. The total membership was 358, comprising 213 males and 145 females. The classification of membership by sex and by age was reported by all of the 3 churches, none of which reported any members under 13 years of age.

Membership in the Liberal Church of America is based upon the acceptance of the principles laid down in the preamble to the Constitution of the United States, the desire to seek the truth, and the purpose to practice the Golden Rule in the activities of daily life.

There were no church edifices, parsonages, nor Sunday schools reported. Church expenditures for 1926 amounting to \$131 were reported by two of the churches, of which \$56 was for current expenses and improvements and \$75 for benevolences, missions, etc.

As this body was not reported at prior censuses, no comparative data are available.

State table.—Table 1 presents the statistics of the Liberal Church of America by States, giving the number and membership of the churches and the membership classified by sex.

TABLE 1.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES AND MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: THE LIBERAL CHURCH OF AMERICA

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	Number of churches	Number of members	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
			Male	Female	Males per 100 females ¹
United States.....	3	358	213	145	146.9
Mountain:					
Colorado.....	1	67	40	27	-----
Pacific:					
Washington.....	1	266	156	110	141.8
California.....	1	25	17	8	-----

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

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION ¹

The first effort to organize a church without theology, creed, or dogma was made by Richard Wolfe, of Denver, Colo. While holding a judicial position in the city and county of Denver, in 1912, he organized a class in Ethical Culture, of which he was selected as teacher. The class resolved to form a church founded on the principles enumerated in the preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America, to be known as the First Agnostic Church of Denver. This project, however, was not immediately carried out.

In 1914 a Rationalist Society was organized in Denver. Mrs. Olive Oliver was elected president and Richard Wolfe secretary. The World War came on, and a division on that subject wrecked the society. Before 1912 Judge J. G. S. Schwalm, of Sterling, Colo., had suggested an "Uncle Sam Religion." Out of these various efforts there grew a feeling that a church based on patriotic and liberal principles should be organized, and in 1922 Frank Hamilton Rice and others formed the First Liberal Church of Denver. Later it was incorporated under the laws of the State of Colorado and given full power to function as a church and also as an educational institution, to ordain ministers and consecrate bishops, and to establish churches and schools and confer degrees.

The basic principles of the Liberal Church are taken from a summary of American Civic Faith, by William Tyler Page, as follows:

We believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. We therefore believe it is our duty to our country to love it, to support its constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.

So far as formulated, their articles of religion are as follows:

To do good; to learn how to live; to seek the truth; to practice the Golden Rule; to act according to common sense; to strive to be thrifty, industrious, saving, and constructively employed; to rationally and intelligently attempt to be healthy, happy, and successful, and assist others to be the same.

The Liberal Church requires no stated belief other than that above given. Only a few churches have been established—one in Denver, Colo., one in San Diego, Calif., and one in Seattle, Wash. These churches are autonomous in government.

Their work consists at present in laying a foundation for future activities. President Rice, of the Denver church, has consecrated a number of bishops, who are spreading the gospel of the Liberal Church and making an effort to establish such churches throughout the Nation.

¹ This statement was furnished by Richard Wolfe, bishop of the Liberal Church of America, Denver, Colo.