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Clate Raymond, MASSA executive director, spearheads Sunday School convention.

What a Sunday School Convention Can Do

BY ELMER TOWNS
Sunday School Editor

Attend a Sunday School convention? Why should Ron Smith of Waterloo, Iowa, want to go to a Sunday School convention? And all the way to Detroit?

But Ron Smith will not be alone. Many like him from Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and half a dozen other states will converge on the Mid-America Sunday School Association Convention, October 8-18, at Motor City's Cobo Hall. More than 60,000 are expected to attend the four-day workshop-convention, according to Clate Raymond, executive secretary of the sponsoring organization.

The majority of the Ron Smiths who attend next month's conclave in Cobo Hall will be Sunday School teachers.

If they have attended Sunday School conventions before, they will come back again for that shot in the arm which will provide them with the inspiration they need in the months ahead. In workshop sessions they will hear about new teaching techniques and see them demonstrated. They will find new teaching tools on display in the exhibit areas, and will rub elbows with other Sunday School teachers eager to share their successes and find consolation for their failures.

All of this, veteran Sunday School convention frequenters have discovered, provides just what they need in order to face their classes with confidence in themselves and the Lord.

But Sunday School teachers are not the only ones who will be on hand. Clergymen from virtually every denomination will crowd the convention hall to get the latest news on what's happening in the Sunday Schools of the U.S. and how they can improve their own Christian education program.

How their attendance at a Sunday School convention has changed the course of their own ministry and the growth of their church is revealed year after year by the testimonies of many pastors.

The Rev. Eugene Hudgens, minister of the First Church of the Nazarene in Detroit, is an illustration.

"Little did I realize what was about to happen to me as I walked into my first Sunday School convention seminar. I found a seat on the third row to the left of the

speaker, and before the afternoon session was over, the room seemed to light up.

"The Spirit of God came," says Hudgens. "My eyes were open to see things I had never seen before. The topic was common enough—adult work in the Sunday School. But the teacher painted the picture of an adult Sunday School class which made it appear equal in challenge and importance to the most exciting vocation on earth. I returned to my church and Sunday School class with new direction and purpose."

Like many other ministers, Hudgens has returned to the Sunday School convention year after year.

"I had the goal of preaching, but God used the Sunday School convention to turn me on to the additional glorious ministry of teaching," he says.

"I have also received a side benefit in fellowship and sharing across denominational lines. The Sunday School convention has been a broadening, expanding benefit, and I have learned to love many Sunday School workers whom I otherwise would have never known. Through these contacts the doors have opened to me to go and observe what is going on in other classes and Sunday Schools."

Hudgens adds, "Now I have great joy in watching the same unfolding drama in my teachers and workers that happened in my own life. I consider the three-day MASSA Convention the most beneficial aspect of our church's teacher-training program and the greatest possible stimulant to better Christian education.

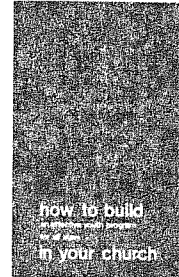
How a church can benefit from the participation of both its teachers and pastors in a Sunday School convention is demonstrated by the Warrendale Community Church in Dearborn, Mich. This church became affiliated with the Michigan Sunday School Association when it met the requirements of the smallest classification. Today Warrendale has grown into a class A Sunday School with an all-time peak attendance of 1,593 and a weekly attendance averaging close to 1,000.

"Our teachers have become better teachers from attending the convention workshops. Our church feels that attendance is a must and we gladly pay the tuition of every member of the staff who

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For more information check 68 on card.

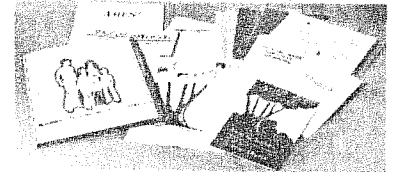
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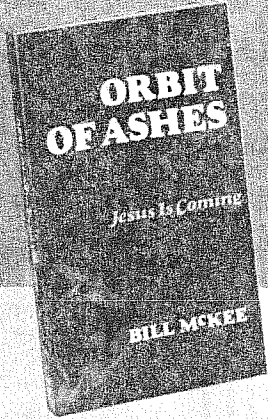
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(continued from page 73)
 attends," says the Rev. Robert Armstrong, minister.

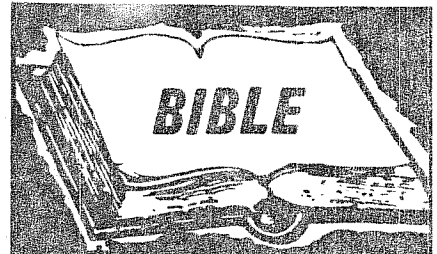
When thinking of other benefits this church received from the convention, Armstrong listed inspiration, information on the latest techniques, and a firsthand look at new teaching tools.

Whole denominations also have benefited from their participation in Sunday School convention activities.

According to Bishop Dale Cryderman of the Free Methodist Church, "At first, it was only an occasional pastor who would take his Sunday School superintendent, but now most pastors, superintendents and teachers have given the convention top priority in their programs of training for efficiency.

"One of the biggest benefits has been the reversal of an attitude being promoted that Sunday School could no longer grow and had lost its place of importance. Along with this has been the emphasis on the centrality of God's Word, the emphasis upon the working of the power of the Holy Spirit and the urgency of the day in which we work."

Added together, it is easy to see why for individual Sunday School teachers and superintendents, pastors, as well as entire church denominations, the Sunday School convention today is an important factor in the ongoing outreach of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



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