

# *Foreign Missions and Overseas Interchurch Service*

## The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

Rev. Norman C. Whittemore  
Memorial Minute

Adopted by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions  
June 17, 1952

The Board made record of the death on May 15, 1952, of the Rev. Norman C. Whittemore, Honorably Retired member of the Korea Mission, at his home in Berkeley, California.

Norman Clark Whittemore was born June 7, 1870, in Brooklyn, New York. He was graduated from Yale University in 1892, and from Union Theological Seminary, New York in 1895. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Westchester in 1896, and was appointed a missionary and assigned to Korea on February 3, 1896. He arrived on the field in October of that year.

In 1906 Mr. Whittemore was married while on furlough to Miss Maude Parsons of New York. They were retired in 1938 and Mr. Whittemore was granted the designation "Honorably Retired." Mrs. Whittemore died in 1950. Mr. Whittemore is survived by his son, Rev. Edward L. Whittemore, secretary of the Berkeley, California, Council of Churches.

Mr. Whittemore made a major contribution to the work in Korea in two closely related fields of service. First of all, he belonged to that early group of itinerant evangelists in Korea, who went everywhere building up that great Korean Church we have come to recognize.

First stationed at Pyengyang, Mr. Whittemore's assignment was in the Syenchun area, which at that time included all Korea north of Pyengyang.

In 1897 Mr. Whittemore reported that he had spent in all nearly five months in the country making three trips to the north (from Pyengyang). He speaks of 6 groups which were reported the previous year, and 6 others which had sprung up during the year. The most interesting group was that at Syenchun, where in May 1897 there were no Christians, and only one or two interested persons. At the end of his visit the last Sunday in June, of that same year, there were 70 or 80 men and women assembled. They were very much in earnest, and gave a great deal of time to Bible study. It was out of this experience that he proposed the opening of a new station at Syenchun which was approved by the Mission at its next meeting.

Mr. Whittemore was transferred from Pyengyang to Syenchun and was soon joined by a number of others, in a rapidly growing work.

Dr. Harry A. Rhodes, in his "History of the Korea Mission", states that the first station report in 1902 gave 2,000 Christians for the area; five years later, 1907, 14,000; in 1912, 20,000. In 1917 the report showed over 15,000 baptized adults and the total number of adherents over 38,000, which was one Christian in every 25 of the population. In 1933 the total number of adherents was 52,000, and baptized Christians 25,000 adults, making one Christian in 16 of the total population.

During this time, many fine church buildings were erected in the area. In Euiju County Mr. Whittemore saw 19 churches and groups established, and from one spot in another county 20 church bells could be heard. In still another county there were 24 churches which could be seen from one point. In all these churches the bulk of the work was eventually taken over by Korean pastors as they were ordained.

Mr. and Mrs. Whittemore resigned in 1926 and remained in this country until October 1929. On their reappointment and return, Mr. Whittemore accepted the secretaryship of the Korean Literature Society with headquarters in Seoul, and supported by six cooperating missions. This was his second major contribution to the work in Korea. This work involved distribution of Christian literature, visiting the several denominational mission stations, supervision of the central and the branch agencies. This agency, one of the most active in all mission areas, reached a much larger clientele under his direction. The report of 1933 tells of the sale of 1,400,000 copies of the "Life of Christ" during the year, distributed to all parts of Korea.

Mr. Whittemore gave much time and thought to the general work of the mission, and was often a member of its Executive Committee. He also is a church man, helping to organize the local presbytery and serving as the chairman of its Committee of Local Missions.

The Board is heartened in this review of the life and services of this devoted servant of Christ, and would rejoice with his son and the many friends in America and Korea in the heritage of faith he has left to us.

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Mrs. Norman C. Whittemore  
Memorial Minute

Adopted by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions  
November 21, 1950

The Board made record of the death of Mrs. Norman C. Whittemore, retired member of the Korea Mission who passed away at her home in Berkeley, California, on October 27, 1950.

Miss Maude Wellesley Parsons was born in New York City on October 30, 1872, and was educated in the New York City schools, at Miss Ballow's School and at Teachers College. She belonged to the Episcopal Church, in which her brother later became a bishop. After teaching for ten years she was appointed as a missionary of the Board on April 16, 1906, and was married the following month to the Rev. Norman C. Whittemore who had served under the Board in Korea since 1896. The next month they sailed to the field.

Their station was at Syenchun, and it was there that Mrs. Whittemore began the task of keeping a home in a foreign land, learning the language, and working with her husband in the evangelistic responsibilities of the station and of the surrounding country. She tells that first year of spending 105 days in itinerating and visiting numerous country churches. She assisted her husband in teaching hymns to the congregation, training the young people, and working in the Sunday School. Gradually her responsibility increased in the Syenchun Station and she had major responsibility in connection with the Girls' School. There were the problems of employment of teachers, there was also the very satisfying experience later of seeing the young women who had been trained across the years graduating and going out to take up their responsibility as Christians in communities across that part of Korea.

Mrs. Whittemore's home was always open to visitors and even when she was unable to visit the churches with her husband and was confined more or less to the duties of the home, visitors from the country districts were cordially received and the contact with Christian women was maintained.

Because of Mrs. Whittemore's health, the family came home to the United States in 1924 and were compelled to resign in 1926. Upon the improvement of her health, Mr. and Mrs. Whittemore were reappointed in 1929 and this time were assigned to Seoul, where Mr. Whittemore became the secretary of the Christian Literature Society. They both missed the close contacts of the country station but found satisfaction in the wider responsibilities that Mr. Whittemore now assumed. Mrs. Whittemore kept up her relationship with the Korean Church by accepting responsibility for one of the Churches on the outskirts of the city, where she went every Sunday and became greatly interested in the work for young people and women. During the early period of their work in Seoul they moved from house to house as some of the other missionaries would go home on furlough; it was a trying period in getting settled in a home. However, it was a period of great satisfaction, as the expanding work of the

Christian Literature Society was assumed. Mrs. Whittemore participated in this work with her husband by visiting various parts of Korea in the interest of the Christian Literature Society. She established weekly Bible classes for women in the W.C.T.U., where she was a member of the Executive Committee. She was always a faithful correspondent in reporting to the Board her activities during the year. She speaks of the assignments which had been given to her, of the work on Sunday, of the study groups, of the "seed sowing" that was being done, and of the satisfaction received in her missionary activities. In spite of ill health, she kept a very great interest in the activities of the Christian church in Seoul and in the foreign community.

Because of her continued ill health, the Board regretfully accepted the resignation of Mr. and Mrs. Whittemore in 1938. They took up residence in Berkeley, California, where their son, the Rev. Edward Whittemore, is now the secretary of the Council of Churches in the Berkeley-Albany district. Funeral services for Mrs. Whittemore were held on October 30, 1950, at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley and interment will be in the family plot at Rye, New York.

In one of Mrs. Whittemore's annual reports she closes her summary of a year's work by quoting her favorite hymn, which she used as a prayer for the coming year:

"Oh Master let me walk with Thee  
In lowly paths of service free;  
Tell me Thy secret; help me bear  
The strain of toil, the fret of care.

In hope that sends a shining ray  
Far down the future's broadening way;  
In peace that only Thou canst give,  
With Thee, O Master, let me live."

With this as her motto, Mrs. Whittemore walked with her Master, even in the last days of her life.

The Board expresses its sympathy to her husband and to her son and prays that the many years of faithful service will remain as cherished memories for them and may be an inspiration to all those who serve now in the hour of need in Korea.