

Levi Pennington

People

10-8-1946

Levi Pennington Writing to Missionaries, October 8, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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Recommended Citation

Pennington, Levi T., "Levi Pennington Writing to Missionaries, October 8, 1946" (1946). *Levi Pennington*. 102.

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1000 Sheridan St., Newberg, Oregon,
October 8, 1946.

Dear Friends:--

Again it is my pleasant task and happy privilege to be writing to some of you who are working in the pioneer sections of the Kingdom of God, out on the frontiers of that realm. Some of you, at least, know the custom of Newberg meeting, that at each monthly meeting some one is appointed or volunteers on behalf of the meeting to "write the missionary letter." For the most part, I think, this letter is written to a single individual on some field; but I am going to send this letter to half a dozen places, hoping that if it would do any good to write to one person or family in one place, it might do more good to write to six or more different places.

"Let me sigh strightawigh" as a cockney friend said in the first speech I ever heard in England, that this letter does not require an answer. Much as we always like to hear from those who represent Friends on the foreign field, I do not want you to feel that you must reply. I have never been on the mission field, even as a visitor, though I'd like to visit a number of such places; but I have been sufficiently well acquainted with missionaries, relatives and friends of mine, to know something of the busy lives you lead. None of you are working where a union provides an eight hour day or a forty hour week, with double time for overtime. On the contrary, I know that you have occasion at times to recall the table of time that you learned in school, not only that sixty seconds make a minute and sixty minutes make an hour, but that it takes twenty-four hours to make a day, and you sometimes have to put in all of them, and could use more if there were more to be had. Don't think that you must answer this letter, but if you feel like replying and can find time in justice to yourself and your work, you may be sure that your letter will be given a careful and appreciative reading.

I often wonder just what would be the reaction of those who receive these missionary letters, if that reaction were perfectly frank and uninhibited. Perhaps we'd be just as happy if we did not know. Perhaps, on the other hand, such letters are more than welcome, even if some of them are no better than the ones I write. I know I've seen the time when a face that I had seen before would be acceptable, even if it were not the best face even in any city block, and when even a letter from the merest acquaintance would make a happy incident in my life among strangers. There was that time when I was teaching my first country school in a place where I knew nobody, and that letter came from -- but that's another story. What does that have to do with a letter to missionaries?

Maybe you will be interested in some of the things that are occurring or are being considered in this part of the world.

The thing that will probably interest you most is the proposition now being considered by the missionary board of the yearly meeting to purchase a farm of more than 3,000 acres in Bolivia, the farm home, a five room house, to be used as a missionary home, and other buildings on the compound to be used for the establishment of the school for the training of native Christian workers. The location of this farm is about fifty miles west of LaPaz. The cost of the farm will be \$34,000.00, with

another \$6,000.00 necessary for building repairs, purchase of machinery and equipment, etc. There are a number of other problems in addition to the raising of the \$25,000.00 necessary to complete the purchase. (The board has on hand \$15,000.00 contributed for the purchase of farm and buildings for the location of this training school, when they had another place in mind.) One of the problems is the twenty-five families of Indians that live on the farm and cultivate part of it for themselves, and who by the Bolivian law cannot be dispossessed except by their own consent. It is expected that these would have to be "bought off" to induce them to relinquish their claims on the land. There are other problems which the board will have to face. They must give an answer very soon and make a substantial payment at once if they are to buy the place. If they can pay \$21,000.00 now, they can have three months to raise the rest.

Another thing that is interesting Friends in this yearly meeting is the terrible need for food and clothing and medicine in many parts of the world. This need in Western Europe seems to grip us most, though there are doubtless other sections quite as needy. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (abbreviated nearly everywhere to UNRRA) was to have put across a nation-wide campaign for the raising of many millions of dollars, and the committee that raised nearly \$3,000.00 in Newberg last spring disbanded when a business man was appointed by the UNRRA to direct the campaign here. But some weeks ago this man informed me that he was not going to do a thing about it (I happened to be chairman of the spring campaign) and had so informed the UNRRA. The campaign of that big organization had been a dismal failure in many places, and in many other places, perhaps in most, no such campaign had been put on at all. So the Newberg Ministerial Association appointed a committee, of which I was made chairman, to promote another relief campaign among the churches (it seems that the campaign will have to be pretty largely confined to the churches, since the Community Chest campaign is on right now, and the people of the town have been promised that this is to be the only general solicitation during the year. The Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the American Cancer Society, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Volunteers of America and the State Chest (which includes the Children's Farm Home, maintained by the W.C.T.U., the Waverly Baby Home, the Albertina Kerr Nursery Home, the Mothers and Children's Home, homes for unmarried mothers, etc) all being included in this one drive. Well, most of the relief for folks across the sea always has and I suppose always will come from the churches. The Friends church here was the first to take this offering for relief, and we raised more than \$1,000.00 in the morning meeting a week ago Sunday, and contributions from other members who were not there for that service have put the total up to nearly or quite \$1,200.00. This is in addition to the \$2,116.32 which this church sent for such relief during the year which ended September 1, and besides the cash we have sent a ton or more of used clothing.

Many of us are helping also in this Community Chest drive, some of us designating the places where our contributions are to be used. I myself have charge of this part of town, some twenty blocks or so. I am not doing all that soliciting myself, but have it organized and my solicitors are starting today, the first day. We are ambitious to have our territory covered first of all and as thoroughly as possible. (One of my solicitors told me last night that he found it impossible to handle his

territory as he has to be out of town, and I must hunt up another man or woman to handle that job.)

Carl D. Byrd, our new pastor, has now been with us, with his family, for more than a month. Before the college opened our congregation was materially increasing, and now that the college is in session, we have seen two or three of the largest audiences that we have had for years. Carl seems to be winning the hearts of the people still more than before he became our pastor. And he was no stranger to us before he was called to the pastoral service here, for he has conducted meetings for us, and we have seen and heard him at yearly meetings.

The college opened with the largest college enrollment in its history, an enrollment approaching the total enrollment when we had the biggest year while the academy was in existence. A considerable number of the new students are ex-service men, their college expenses being paid by the government under the so-called "GI Bill of Rights." A considerable number of these men are married and with families. There are six residence units on the campus for ex-service men, three on the southwest corner of the athletic field, each housing four families, and three on the campus to the north, each also housing four families. These latter are for men who are not in college; the one on the athletic field being for students. There is a great housing shortage, here as elsewhere. President Gulley himself is feeling this, as he has sold his farm, with the famous stone house that he erected, and has no place to go. He wants to buy a lot and build as soon as this becomes possible. For the present he would like to buy a place for temporary quarters, until he can get the material for building.

There have been many delays because of the difficulty of getting material even when a building project is approved by the proper governmental authorities. But the remodeling and repair of the old college building is nearly or quite completed, as is the enlargement of the big residence purchased for an auxiliary dormitory for girls, where five sleeping rooms and a big bath room have been built on the third floor. The work on the gymnasium has been progressing rapidly for the last two months, and it will be completed before many more weeks. Use will be made of part of this building as a temporary dormitory for men.

There have been numerous changes in the faculty, and most of those on the force at present would not be recognized by one who has been away for a few years. But President Gulley, Prof. Oliver Weesner, Prof. Mary C. Sutton, Prof. Perry D. Macy, and Prof. Russell W. Lewis are still on the force, all dating back to the '20's or earlier.

But if I do not end this pretty soon, you'll think I am writing a book. I'll desist.

With best wishes, and the hope and confidence that God will be with you richly as you labor on the boundaries of His earthly kingdom, I am

Sincerely your friend,