

Our Cause in Dexter

Br. Jenkins—Thinking that you might be glad to hear from this place, and having a short space left in my letter, I do not know as I could fill it better, than to give a short sketch of the rise and progress of Universalism in this place.

Five years ago, there were scarcely enough Universalists in this place to have saved it from destruction, had the same demand been made against it, that there was against ancient Sodom. For I believe that “ten” could not have been found. Though there were a few like “righteous Lot remained uncorrupted amid the contagion. About the year 1839 or 1840 they commenced having occasional preaching. Br. [William] Sias, and some others preached a few times. Very few could be induced to attend. Sometime during the year 1840, Br. J[ohn] M. Austin came to this country to visit his friends, and an appointment was given out for him to preach in this place. Quite a number from “curiosity,” and other considerations, were drawn out to hear him. He preached two or three times. This gave a sort of impetus to our cause. Many were converted during his stay here. After he left, Br. H[enry] L. Hayward lectured occasionally at 5 o’clock P.M. The congregation gradually increased. Application was made for the Episcopal church to hold meetings in once in four weeks, at 5 o’clock P.M., when not occupied, but was refused. A subscription was forthwith started to raise money to build a church of their own. In 1841 a society was formed consisting of about 30 members. They went on to build a house. The idea was ridiculed by their opposers, some called them fools—some said they might possibly get a frame up, but it would only be to rot down—others tried to discourage them, but they were not to be baffled.—They “counted the cost,” and build they would.—Scoffs and sneers had no effect upon them, other than to move them on in the good cause. They went forth in the strength and power of God, and in *twelve weeks* from the time they commenced, they dedicated a neat and commodious temple to the worship of the “God of love.” Br. Hayward was immediately engaged one half the time. Thus they moved on, in the strength and power of Omnipotence. Although they were all poor in this world’s goods, yet they were “strong in the Lord.” Br. H. continued to dispense the word of life, and salvation, until July, 1842, when he left and went to Homer. The desk was supplied by brethren of the Association until October, when I received an invitation to settle with the society. I came here in early November, and have been feebly endeavoring to preach “Jesus and the resurrection” ever since. During the present year 36 members have been added to the society. We now number 63. We have just commenced forming a Sabbath school—purchased a library of about 65 volumes and shall probably have, when we get fully organized, 40 or 50 scholars. We have an excellent choir of singers, assisted by a bass viol and two clarinets. I think we have abundant reason to “thank God and take courage.” Our society is nearly as large as any other two societies in the place. Our congregation varies from 70 to 150.—Sometimes we have more, and occasionally less. I think a church will soon be formed—or at least I *hope* this will be the case... God grant that the good work may go on until a world shall be redeemed from sin and ignorance—until all shall be brought to rejoice in God as the Rock of their salvation...

Dexter, August, 1844

Yours, G. S. Abbott

Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, Utica NY, 23 Aug 1844
[a Universalist newspaper]