

Gave Their Pastor Three Months' Notice

Sudden Action of the Second Universalist Society CHURCH TO BE CLOSED

It is Claimed that Insufficient Funds Were Subscribed
for the Maintenance of the Church for the Present Year

As a result of the annual meeting of the Society of the Second Universalist Church, held at the church on Spencer street last night, the pastor, Rev. Henry B. Taylor, who has preached from that pulpit for a year or more, received a formal notification from a committee that his services would be dispensed with on April 1st of this year, the reasons for the announcement being a lack of sufficient funds pledged to maintain the church longer. It was also announced that the church would be closed on April 1st.

The announcement, as well as the meeting, was of a rather secret nature, the various members of the church showing a strong tendency to keep all knowledge of the matter from the newspapers. The meeting was of the most interesting character, and some startling statements were made and denied. It was hinted that the real reason for the action of the society was not a lack of funds, but the withdrawal of the support of certain wealthy and influential members, and that this was due to two sermons preached a few weeks ago by the pastor aimed against the degradation of the municipal government, the power of the saloon, and pleading for the proper enforcement of the law.

This rumor was stated in so many words at the meeting last night and was as emphatically denied. The person who made the denial said that the real reason for the failure of the members to raise the funds was that "the church had been killed by Kirkpatrick," and he regretted that a rumor of any other reason should gain credence. The sermons referred to were printed in their entirety in the columns of the Democrat and Chronicle. Whatever the reason for this unexpected action of the society, the following facts remain true.

In the middle of last November a meeting of the church was held at which forty-one out of a total of eighty-five members pledged a sum sufficient to maintain the running expenses of the church for the present year. The church has never had a large membership, but many of its members are wealthy and influential, and the society looked forward to a year of promise.

On Sunday, November 27th the pastor preached a sermon on "Law Enforcement," a full report of which was published on Monday. In this sermon Mr. Taylor was bold in his denunciation of the saloon and the saloon keepers who violated the law, and arraigned the officials of Rochester in unsparing terms for allowing law violations. On the following Sunday Mr. Taylor again preached on the same theme, taking as his subject "Non-

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Enforcement of the Law in Rochester and the Sovereign People. In this discourse the preacher was again straightforward in his condemnation on the liquor traffic. Furthermore, on December 18th, the Rev. G. A. Kratzer, of Middleport, preached a ringing temperance sermon from the pulpit of the church at the invitation of Mr. Taylor. It may also be added that Mr. Taylor had actively identified himself with the work of the Rochester Prohibition Union of Christian Men and the Law Enforcement League.

Last evening the meeting of the church members was called and there were many warm discussions by those present. It was then that the rumor referred to above was given out and denied. A committee reported that out of the forty-one members who had pledged themselves to the support of the church in November, only fifteen remained, the rest having withdrawn their pledges. It was also reported that the faithful fifteen had pledged but an insignificant sum, less than \$200, for the support of the church during the year. It being obvious that this sum was insufficient, the action was taken which resulted in the notification of Mr. Taylor. The pastor had a contract with the church whereby it was stipulated that he should have three months' notice in the event of the body desiring to dispense with his services.

When the announcement was made a member of the church arose and asked for the reasons for the withdrawal of so many pledges. He stated that he had heard the rumor, but did not believe it. Another member then stated that the church was really unable to support a pastor, and that it was in a weakened condition anyway, owing to the escapades of David M. Kirkpatrick, a former pastor of the church. He also denied the truth of the rumor that certain members had withdrawn from the church owing to the fact that that they were not in sympathy with Mr. Taylor's course.

The matter has aroused bitter discussion among the church members, and it is hinted that there are now two factions in the society of very different opinions.

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Transcribed on 6 Feb 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY