

[Webster, Monroe Co.]

Letter from Rev. W. [William] Tompkins

WEBSTER, N.Y., March 31, 1856

BR. AUSTIN:—I have not troubled the columns of the Ambassador very much, for the last three years; not, however, because I have not liked the paper, for it ever comes laden with the choicest selections of gospel truth which makes glad the soul. But, with your permission, I should [would] be glad to inform my friends and the Universalist public, where I have been, and what I have been about for the last three years.

I came to Webster in June, 1853, and found the Society here destitute of the preached word, cold, in debt, and disheartened. They complained that they could not keep a minister. They said that as soon as they obtained a pastor, some more able Society would offer more money than they were able to pay, and then they were left destitute again.

I preached to them, one half of the time for the first year, and for the last two years, all the time. I have also preached in school-houses, in the surrounding country, concerning the faith “that was once delivered to the saints” and the good things of the kingdom. I hope the seeds thus sown, will spring up and bear fruit to the glory of God. While I have been here the congregation has suffered much, in the loss of a number of its members, and liberal supporters [e.g. by death]. But we would not murmur or complain, for our loss is their immortal gain.

During my ministry in Webster, the Society has doubled its membership, beautified and improved its church by repainting, and furnishing blinds for the windows, and purchased a first class Melodeon for the choir. In these improvements the Ladies’ Sewing Society is entitled to great credit.

I must not forget to mention the father of our Society, Br. E. Cook, through whose liberality it is now free of debt. May the Lord bless him, as he goes down the declivity of life, for his noble and praise-worthy munificence.

There is nothing I can see now, to hinder the prosperity of this Society, if the brethren will be devoted to the great principles of our faith, and labor for the cause with a commendable and prudent zeal. But unfortunately there seems to be no one to take the lead, who is determined to triumph. The brethren are generally generous and benevolent, but an earnest and active man who never thinks of failure, is what they want. There was such an one, but alas, he is not. The Lord hath taken him away. I find my own health is on the decline. These cold winters are too hard for me. My throat difficulty increases, and I cannot endure what I once could.

I expect to leave here on the first of May. But I hope the Society will not again allow themselves to be destitute of the preached word. If some young man of good abilities should come among them, he would find warm friends and generous hearts. I say “young man,” because the friends do not think they are able to pay a large salary. But what they agree to pay, they will pay promptly. May the good Father send them a Shepherd.

Yours in Love,
WM. TOMPKINS

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 19 Apr 1856