

WWI veteran served 26 years as First Presbyterian pastor

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His service during World War I as a chaplain ministering to the troops could well have been the defining achievement in the life of Archie Byron Jackson. Instead, he accentuated his legacy by transitioning from the pulpit of a Methodist church to becoming a Presbyterian preacher and later being elected as the commander of the American Legion post in Jefferson City.



A native of the Pacific Northwest, Jackson was born in 1890 and raised near the community of Roseburg, Oregon. He attended the local school and while still a young boy, developed an interest in the printing business while working for a local newspaper.

The Sunday News and Tribune noted on Sept. 30, 1951, that Scott “went on to become foreman of the Freewater Times and attended school at nights. He admits cautiously that he attended school in ‘order to play basketball.’”

It was while attending classes at Columbia College (a Methodist educational institution) in Milton, Oregon, that he met the woman who became his fiancée.

“Miss Ruth King of (Nevada, Missouri) was married Wednesday at Milton, Oregon, to Rev. A.B. Jackson of that place,” the Southwest Mail newspaper reported on Aug. 25, 1911. “Rev. Jackson is a Methodist minister and will join the Nevada conference this fall. Mrs. Jackson is the daughter of Rev. Joseph King and is a most charming and accomplished lady.”

He and his wife later moved to the Kansas City area after their marriage, where Jackson preached at several Methodist churches during the next few years. He also never divested himself from the pursuit of an education, later attending Missouri Valley College in Marshall, Missouri, and earning his doctor of divinity degree.

On June 5, 1917, the 26-year-old Jackson registered for the military draft at his local precinct in Kansas City. Military records indicate he had served briefly in the National Guard while still

living in Oregon and was claiming exemption from military service since he was married with two dependent children.

However, on June 10, 1918, he was inducted into the U.S. Army and assigned to provide ministerial support to his fellow soldiers as a chaplain. Much of his early training occurred at Camp Pike, Arkansas, but he was later assigned to the 62nd Infantry Regiment and spent most of his duty time stationed at Camp Lee, Virginia. He received his discharge from the Army in the summer of 1919.

“Several changes were made in the assignment of pastors in the Kansas City District at the Methodist Episcopal conference for Southwest Missouri, which closed in Boonville Monday night,” the Kansas City Star printed on Sept. 17, 1919. “The Rev. A.B. Jackson, who served one year as a chaplain in the Army, returns to Blue Springs.”

Involved in the community, Jackson was also elected superintendent of public schools in Blue Springs in 1920. Then, in 1923, when Presbyterian and Methodist churches merged in the town of La Plata, Jackson became a Presbyterian pastor and led the newly united congregation.

A fresh moment in the career of Jackson came in 1925, when he accepted a call to First Presbyterian Church in Jefferson City. His inspirational leadership resulted in the congregation dedicating a new church in 1928. Additionally, he is credited with growing the congregation from 350 to 975 members during his ministry.

The Jefferson City Post-Tribune noted Jackson’s many activities in an article printed on Aug. 12, 1927. The newspaper explained, “In addition to being pastor of First Presbyterian Church, (he) is also post commander of the local American Legion, past grand chancellor of the Knights of Pythias, member of the Boy Scout Council ... and holds various other civic offices.” In 1927, the same year he was elected commander of American Legion Post 5 in Jefferson City, he attended the American Legion convention in Paris. During the next few years, he and his wife raised their three children while maintaining an active involvement in many levels of the local and statewide community.

One of the activities he enjoyed for many years was writing a regular column for the local newspaper and he continued his education at the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and Vanderbilt University in Nashville. His physician advised him that he needed to address some growing health issues and in 1951, he and his wife moved to Poplar Bluff, where he pastored a small church.

Jackson and his wife remained in Poplar Bluff until his retirement in 1955, at which time they decided to return to Jefferson City, the community they knew as home. Even in “retirement,” he remained committed to supporting several organizations and in 1956 became international head of the Knights of Pythias — a humanitarian fraternal organization — when elected supreme chancellor.

His wife of 59 years died in 1971 and was buried in Riverview Cemetery. Two years later, the 82-year-old Jackson died and was laid to rest alongside his wife.

In his golden years, Jackson continued penning columns for the Jefferson City News Tribune under the title of “Dr. Jackson’s Jottings.” Less than three months prior to his own death, he shared with the readers something of a parting gift of insights based upon his many decades of experience serving various congregations and ministering to his fellow soldiers during World War I.

“The church’s job is not so much to save the world as to save souls, not so much to rebuild society as to redeem lives,” he wrote. “Do this well and redeemed men will redeem society. Save men and saved men will save the world.”

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