

EVA HUGHES MONOLOGUE

O my, what a pretty sight you are. I have been looking down on your meetings for many years wishing I could be with you. And do you know, St. Peter granted me that wish this year. So here I am. I have always loved the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and especially the women's organization and mission work. First, let me introduce myself. I am Eva Hughes - the person who began the Perpetual Membership Endowment in 1924. I am sure many of you have heard my name.

Let me share my story. I was born into a staunch Cumberland Presbyterian family in 1881 (129 years old). My parents were Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Wollard and we lived on a farm near Bolivar, MO. The Barren Creek Church was near by. My parents were there every time the doors were opened. I attended the Missionary Society with my mother. The family often went to Springfield Presbytery and Missouri Synod. We attended camp meetings at Camp Cumberland near South Greenfield, and what wonderful revivals we had! All of this made an impact on my life.

My mother was the one who taught me about the mission work in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. She told me how our mission work struggled after the attempted union with the Presbyterian Church in 1906. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was in shambles, but the few women who chose to stay with our denomination were busy picking up the pieces. Only two missionaries remained with our denomination Gam Sing Quah and Sallie Herbert in a Mountain Mission in North Carolina.. When the Convention met in Dickson, TN, in 1907 the women left with a firm commitment to build a new missionary program. They were asked by the General Assembly to be responsible for the finances – a tall order! New work was established in China and South America. The Chinese Mission in San Francisco, CA, was re-established. Eventually, in 1923, a young woman from our Synod, Bernice Barnett of Odessa, MO, answered the call to become a missionary. She later went to South America. I couldn't do mission work myself, but I began to ponder how I could help out financially and what I could do with my life. That is what led to the establishment of the Perpetual Membership Endowment. I visited with a banker and he said that the banks were paying 4% on time deposits. Our missionary dues for the year were \$1.20. I figured, if I could place \$30.00 in a time deposit the interest drawn each year would perpetuate my dues for the rest of my life and thereafter. I began saving my milk and egg

money to raise my \$30.00 even though I knew it would take a long time. I then wrote Mrs. Johnnie Massey Clay, President of Convention making my proposal to establish the Perpetual Membership Endowment. The proposal was accepted.

In 1924, the Convention presented the first Perpetual Membership to the Rev. Mrs. Louisa Woosley, the first woman ordained a Cumberland Presbyterian minister. In 1925, what a wonderful surprise I had, the Convention took up a freewill offering to make me a perpetual member. Regretfully, I was not at the Convention so they telegraphed me that I had been given the membership. That was the high light of my life to know that these funds would be used to help sent the gospel to other parts of the world. Another high light in my life was that I too was ordained a minister in 1928 by Springfield Presbytery and spent the rest of my life as a pastor of churches in that area. That fulfilled a call in my life.

I wish I had time to tell you more, but what I really want to share with you is how the Perpetual Membership has grown through the years. It is hard for me to believe, but at the end of 2009, there was **\$835,553.71** in the Perpetual Membership Endowment. It all began with \$30.00 and Eva Hughes. Besides the Perpetual Membership, there are four other memberships available: Golden Patron Membership for \$150.00 for those who have served 50 years or more; Silver Patron Membership for \$125.00 for those who have served at least 25 years; Patron Membership for \$100.00 with no restrictions; Diamond Perpetual Membership for \$50.00 for those who have 10 or more years of service in the church or women's ministry. Any of these memberships can be given to honor, or in memory, of a relative or friend. This is a wonderful way to recognize worthy individuals.

All Patron Memberships are placed in one fund. The total of the Patron Membership Endowment Fund at the end of 2009 was **\$664,496.21**. Thus, the total of the Membership Endowment at the end of 2009 was **\$1,500,049.92**. So you see, we can all serve in some way. From tiny beginnings come great things.

Is there anyone who would like to bestow a membership today? If so, would you please come forward.

Written by Joann Alexander for the 2009 and 2010 Convention meetings in Memphis, TN and Montgomery Bell Park, Burns, TN.