

Presbyterian Neighborhood Houses and the Settlement Movement, 1890-1965

Early in the first half of the twentieth century, the social settlement movement in the United States sought to respond to the flood of foreign immigrants pouring into American cities from all over the world. The Progressive reformers who organized and staffed settlement houses (also known as neighborhood houses) wanted to provide much-needed social services to immigrants while also introducing them to “American” mores.

Presbyterians responded to the needs of these new populations. Congregations transformed missions and Sunday schools into settlement houses. Presbyteries and synods worked with local and national organizations to sponsor new community centers. These settlement houses reached out to a varied mix of cultures including Asian, Italian, Dutch, and Eastern European. Through the years, the neighborhood houses evolved, their work changing with the needs of the specific community.

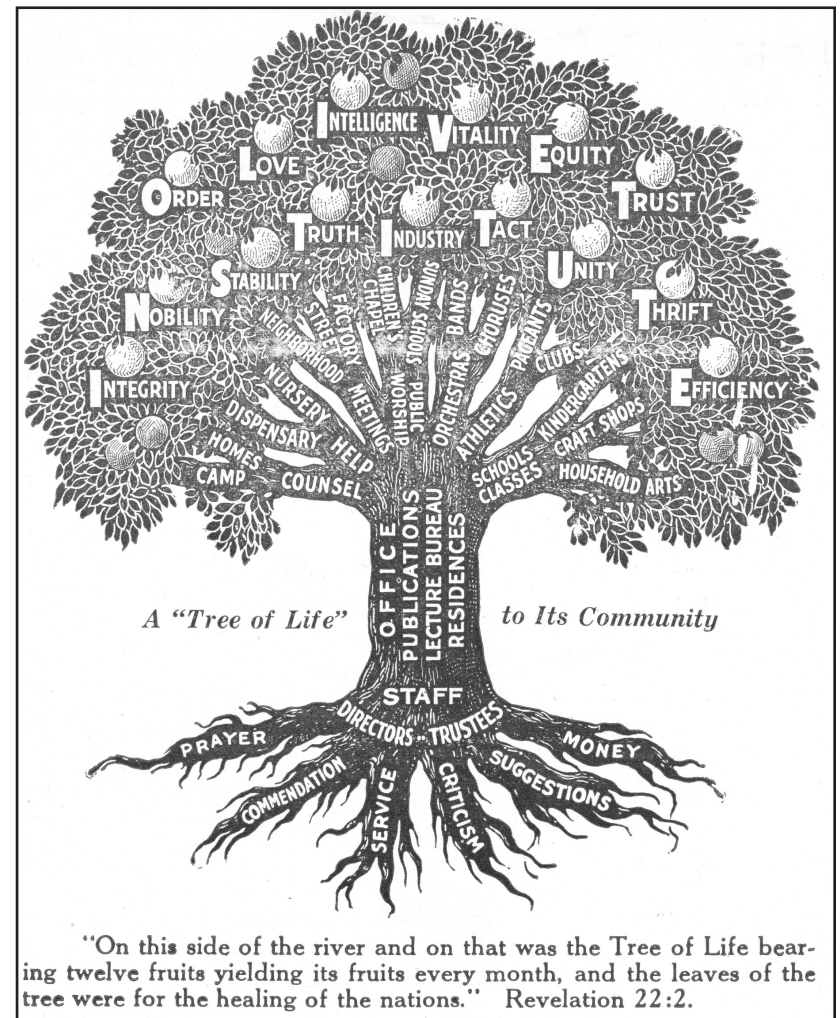
Cover Image:
 “Olivet Institute Tree of Life,” *Annual Report of the 35th year of Olivet Institute, Chicago, IL, 1923*. Board of National Missions Records, RG 301.7, Presbyterian Historical Society.



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Heritage Sunday: People will come from East and West



“Neighborhood houses derive from the conditions and needs of our city and industrial centers. They are an outreach arm of the Church, an informal unconventional method of making religion meaningful to thousands who ordinarily would not be within the reach of churches.”

The Church in the Changing City. New York: Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1938, p. 13.