

Celebrate Heritage Sunday on May 18, 2003
“The Earth Is the Lord’s...”

“...Love of mother earth is found in every country but no where more strikingly than in India.” So said Presbyterian missionary John Goheen in an essay describing his agricultural work. This year we celebrate Heritage Sunday on May 18 with the theme, “The Earth Is the Lord’s and All Those Who Live in It” (Psalm 24:1). Congregational resources for this year’s Heritage Sunday will focus on the history of agricultural mission work in India. Since the nineteenth century, agricultural missions have been, and continue to be, one way Presbyterians have demonstrated God’s love for the peoples of the earth. By bringing improved farming techniques to people of other cultures, Presbyterians meet physical needs along with spiritual needs. India is one of the countries where agricultural mission work changed people’s lives for the better.

Presbyterian agricultural work in India began in 1903 when Samuel Higginbottom established a small farm school. Developed to teach scientific agriculture to farmers, the school eventually grew into the Allahabad Agricultural Institute. This type of mission work gained support as other India missions created projects to offer practical assistance to Indian farmers. These included Arthur Slater with his Etah poultry farm, John Goheen with the Sangli Movable School, the Rural Community School at Moga led by Edwin and Irene Harper, and the India Village Service Project. All of these projects focused on teaching practical skills that helped improve economic and living conditions in rural areas.

Presbyterian Heritage Sunday has been set aside by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as an annual day to celebrate, reflect upon, and learn more about the long and rich history of Presbyterianism in America. It falls on the Sunday closest to May 21, the date of the opening of the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1789. The Presbyterian Historical Society supports Heritage Sunday by using our collections to prepare resources for study and worship.

The Presbyterian Historical Society provides a downloadable bulletin cover, a puzzle for children, and an exhibit highlighting agricultural missions. These resources will be available on the society’s website <http://www.history.pcusa.org/cong/heritage.html> after April 1, 2003.

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