

UNION OF CHURCHES.

FIRST AND SHADY AVENUE C. P.

CONGREGATIONS CONSOLIDATE.

United Church Will Be Known as
the First—Union of Members, Prop-
erties and Debts—End of a Long
Church Fight.

The First Cumberland Presbyterian congregation, whose house of worship is located at Wylie avenue and Congress street, has apparently reached the last chapter in its troubled history and will soon cease to exist except in name. Arrangements have been made for a consolidation with the Shady Avenue church of the same denomination, the resulting body to be called the First Cumberland Presbyterian church of Pittsburgh. It seems to be the sort of a consideration that took place between Jonah and the whale, the Shady Avenue church in this case representing the whale with the First church reposing in its somewhat contracted interior.

Citizens of middle age remember the time when the First church worshiped in a building which stood on the site now occupied by the Duquesne club. The location became undesirable owing to the encroachments of business and the property was sold for about \$50,000. Of this sum about \$10,000 was used in the satisfaction of a mortgage which rested upon the property and almost the entire remainder was invested in the present property on Wylie avenue. The church did not prosper in the new locality. One pastor after another tried to make a success of it, but every effort was more or less of a failure. In 1894 Rev. C. H. Lincoln took charge of the church and there was a year of prosperity. At the close of the year some troubles arose which made the church famous in the ecclesiastical annals of the city.

Appealed to the Courts.

Complications arose and both ecclesiastical and civil courts were appealed to. This was disastrous to the congregation, which came out of its troubles very much weakened. It was decided that successful work could not be done in that locality, and a movement to sell the property and seek a new location was put on foot. Then it was found that the members, who were scattered throughout the two cities would greatly differ in opinion as to where the new church should be located and that unanimous action in the matter was impossible. The church decided to throw the responsibility on the general board of home missions, located in St. Louis, and so deeded all its property to the board with the proviso, among others, that the proceeds of the property, if sold, should be used in the establishment and support of missions in the cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny. The board also was to supply the pulpit as a mission station.

In accordance with this arrangement the board secured the services of Rev. D. E. Bushnell, D. D., who assumed charge of the mission early last year. He found up-hill work, and there was not much prosperity. In spite of his efforts to restore the suspended animation of the church or at least to galvanize what most people considered a corpse, the board concluded at the end of the year that the experiment was not a success and did not return Dr. Bushnell.

The presbytery has taken the matter in hand and has recommended a consolidation of the two churches named. The Shady Avenue church has about 200 members and a debt. It is expected to come with its members, property and debt into the First church and assume its name in order that certain property rights of the old church may not be disturbed. The consolidation will bring together two sets of members, two church properties and two debts. In the end it is expected one church without debt will be the result. There are some details to be arranged, as the board of home missions is a party to the transaction, having full charge of the First church property. It is understood it will insist upon such a share of the proceeds of the old church property as will enable it to establish a mission in some desirable locality in Pittsburgh or Allegheny.

The Shady Avenue church has already acted in the matter and agreed to respect the recommendation of the presbytery in regard to consolidation, and the First church is willing. The old property on Wylie avenue has been placed on the market, and the new church, or rather the old one, with its acquisition, will be located on Shady avenue. Practically the First church has died of internal trouble and will live henceforth as the result of a transfusion of blood.