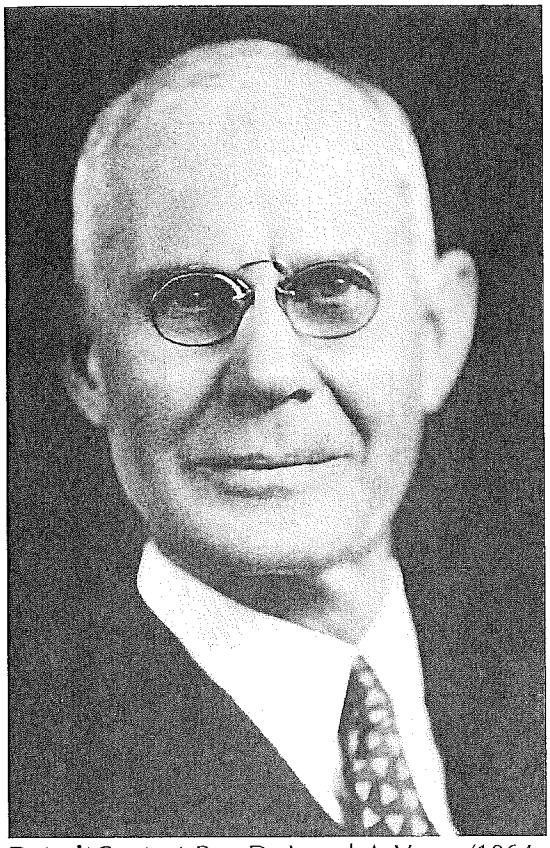


Detroit Contact: Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Vance (1864–1961), minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Detroit, arranged for Jones to come to the Dodge Community Center in 1932. Photo: PHS, Phila.

the building, so we had the building going twenty-four hours a day. One of our tasks was to see that everybody became an American citizen. In our community, everybody became an American citizen through our citizenship classes.

The United Automobile Workers was started at this time.[13] There was a question whether the building should be used by the labor union people in our community. Downtown First Presbyterian Church was run by people who were General Motors executives. So it was important that we clear the matter of the use of the building with Dr. Vance. I told him: "These are our people. They come from our community. Can they meet at our place?" We were given the clearance. If they were the people from our community, then they should meet there.

We had an interesting time holding the labor union meetings at the Dodge House. One of the organizers of the Polish group in the automobile workers, Stanley Novak, became a state senator in Michigan during that time. He and I became close friends. He married a girl who had been an active church member. But she gave it up because she said the church was not interested in the kind of work we were doing. We helped bring Stanley into the Protestant church movement. He became involved in her church and she became an active member of her church again. Through our work at Dodge House we had many relationships with the labor movement.

Organizing the Auto Workers

R.P.: Did the actual organizing meetings of the automobile workers take place at Dodge House?

H.J.: Oh yes! The Plymouth local on the night shift would meet at our place after they got off at midnight. They'd have their meetings from 12:30 to three or four o'clock in the morning. They met downstairs right under our bedroom. Sometimes the meetings would get noisy.

R.P.: The United Automobile Workers [UAW] was just being organized in the mid-thirties. They were being fought by management as well as from within by factional disputes. Was this the time that struggle was going on?

H.J.: That's right. At that time we had a lot of students come to Dodge House. The student summer program, which expanded into an active program, was started over the opposition of the people in New York. I had asked them if we could get their support for bringing college students during the summer to the Dodge Community House. They told us: "No, you can't have students." But we insisted that it was important for college students to know what was going on in Detroit. So the students came and helped us with summer activities for the children on the playground, in the gym, in handicraft classes, in story hours.

The young people came to us from all over the country. They matured through their summer experiences. Some of them became important in the life of our church.

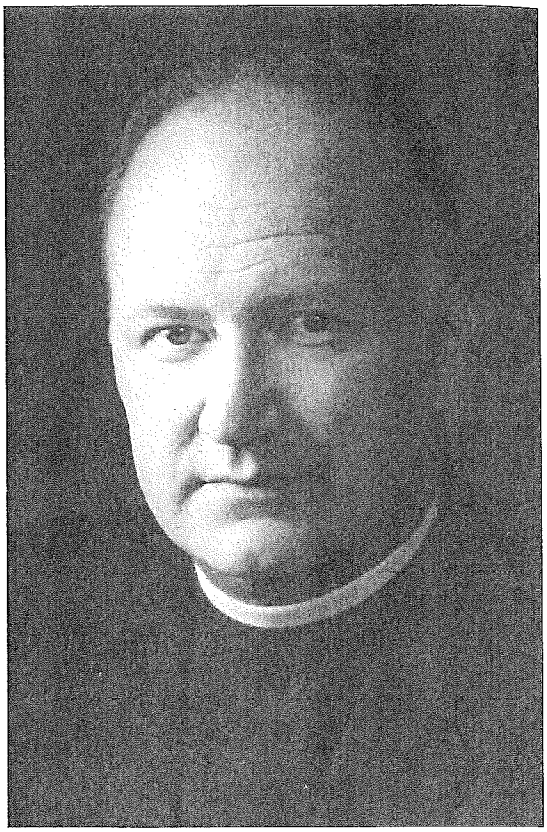
Chuck Leber, Jr., was one of them. He had been thrown out of Princeton Seminary.[14] He came to us. He married an Alma College girl while he was in Detroit. He came to Detroit convinced of what needed to be done in the inner cities of America. He went back to Princeton, became an A student, graduated, and then went to the "iron-bound" district of Newark, New Jersey. We had many people like Chuck Leber. I can count seven present presbytery executives who were part of summer groups at the Dodge House.

The point is, we were trying to do creative things in training young people to experience what needed to be done in society. We had them meet all kinds of people, from left, right, and center. They met with Gerald L. K. Smith, and Father Coughlin.[15] We had them meet with people who were leading the country in various directions. The students needed to understand what these voices were saying and the directions they wanted to lead the country, and then what the church had to say. Those were some interesting summers—those nine to ten summers.

Dodge Community House became a symbol for doing the kind of things that needed to be done during depressed times. Under Dr. Shriver's office, there were national meetings of neighborhood houses workers from across the country. We were active in the Neighborhood House National Conference. During our time the national conference was held in Detroit. I served as president of the Detroit Settlement House Workers for several years and representative on the National Board of the Federation of Settlements.

R.P.: Would you say your connections with organized labor began in your work at Dodge House?

H.J.: Yes, we were involved in the first sit-down strike in the automobile industry. Not only the workers, but the young people from Dodge House. These were the young people from our church and the settlement house who were involved. They were "sitting in" at the Midland Steel plant. I went to



Early Trainee: Rev. Charles T. Leber, Jr. (b. 1924) worked with Jones in Detroit in the 1940s, returned to seminary, and became executive director of Dodge House in 1953. Photo: PHS.

all of the meetings of the union which met in the Slovak Hall. I was at the meetings of those who were on the outside of the plant. I heard the reports of the negotiator who was the go-between for those on the inside and those from the company. The negotiator came to report to the people on the outside every afternoon.

The negotiator had something of a Scots brogue, but more than that, he made very incisive reports as to where things stood. I remember him saying: "We have now reached 95% of the goals which we have asked. We have not reached them all. The company is now shipping out some of the work to other places. I recommend that we call off the strike."

I admired his approach. I determined that after the strike was over and after he had a week to catch up on sleep I called him up and said I'd like to have lunch with him. We had lunch at the YMCA cafeteria. We sat

down to lunch and I said, "John, you're Scots, you must be Presbyterian." He said, "I was a Presbyterian. I left the church. The church was always with us until we got to a crucial point. Then it backed down because the owners were part of the church, in Scotland and everywhere else. So I left the church. I am a Communist now." His name was John Anderson.[16] We kept in touch with John Anderson through the years. He became a church member again. He was very much a part of the UAW. People accused the automobile workers of being Communist because John Anderson proclaimed loudly that he was Communist.

R.P.: This was a crucial period in the life of the UAW. The Reuther brothers were trying to squeeze out a lot of these people. Anderson was one of those. So was R. J. Thomas. I believe he may also have been a Communist.[17]

H.J.: Yes, and he was also a Presbyterian.

R.P.: R. J. Thomas was too?

H.J.: Sure. I was close to him. He always claimed that I was his pastor.

R.P.: You know who else was part of that group—Jim Wishart, the son of "Prexy" Wishart, the president of the College of Wooster.[18] Remember "Prexy" Wishart ran against William Jennings Bryan in that famous fight for the moderatorship of the Presbyterian Church in 1923.[19] It was at the height of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in the church. His son Jim Wishart was considered the "black sheep" in the family. I'm not sure how much of a "black sheep" he was, considering his father. Jim Wishart ended up as the research director of the Amalgamated Butcher Workmen of America in Chicago. I invited him to speak at a Conference on the Church and Wage-Earners at McCormick Seminary in the seventies.

H.J.: He was research director of the UAW before that.

R.P.: When the R. J. Thomas and the Anderson people were finally squeezed out of the UAW, Jim went to the Farm Implement Workers. You know, perhaps R. J. Thomas met Jim Wishart at Wooster. Thomas was from Ohio and spent two years at the College of Wooster.

H.J.: You see then that it was important that a Presbyterian guy like myself would be around. I was a member of the Detroit Presbytery, although I wasn't preaching in a church. I was invited to many churches to preach and I moderated the session of the First Presbyterian Church when Dr. Vance was away. I was elected moderator of the Detroit Presbytery in 1935.

R.P.: All this time a lot of these folks organizing the automobile workers were of Presbyterian background. Did you feel that their faith had something to do with their concern for working people?

H.J.: Their faith had put them in touch with the issues. They had a real leaning toward justice. But they didn't feel the church was with them. That's why it was important to have someone like myself there at that time.

When the war ended, the Presbyterian Church had to consider its work in the Pacific area again. The foreign mission boards of the U.S. denominations sent delegations to meet with church people in China and in Japan. Our mission secretaries asked: "What would you like us to do? What kind of people do you want?" Those in China were specific: "We want this person and this person because they understand us and what we are doing. But you never send us anybody to reach the industrial workers of China." The Foreign Board secretaries said: "But China is an agricultural nation. China isn't an industrial country." The Chinese replied: "You don't know our situation. Many industrial changes are happening. We have railroads, ships, and factories. We have just taken over many of the factories which the Japanese built on the east coast. The industrial workers in these places are being organized."

A Call to Industrial Mission in China

R.P.: This was the beginning of the church's industrial consciousness in Asia?

H.J.: Yes, the Foreign Board secretaries were from the Congregationalists, Method-

ists, Presbyterians, and some Baptists. The Chinese church leadership asked the Methodists for industrial missioners but they said they had nobody for the work. The Baptists said they didn't have anybody available. One of the Presbyterians present, a man named Lloyd Ruland,[20] responded: "We'll take the assignment. I think I know someone who might work in this field. When we wanted missionaries trained for the revolutionary changes happening in India, we sent them to work on the summer staff of this man in Detroit. They got introduced to the revolution taking place in our automobile industry. I think this man might be willing to leave his work in Detroit and come."

Lloyd Ruland came back from China. The General Assembly was meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The year was 1947. I had just been elected moderator of the Detroit Presbytery so I was supposed to attend the General Assembly. Lloyd Ruland met me there and asked, "Will you go to China?"

R.P.: Your missionary call had been postponed a long time.

H.J.: I told Ruland I would have to go home to talk to Maurine. I went back to Detroit. This was May 1947. Maurine was ready. We packed up. We had to sell most everything we owned. We left in July on a ship out of New York. The trip took thirty days—first a stop in Cuba, then through the Panama Canal. We went up to California to get refueled and then across the Pacific.

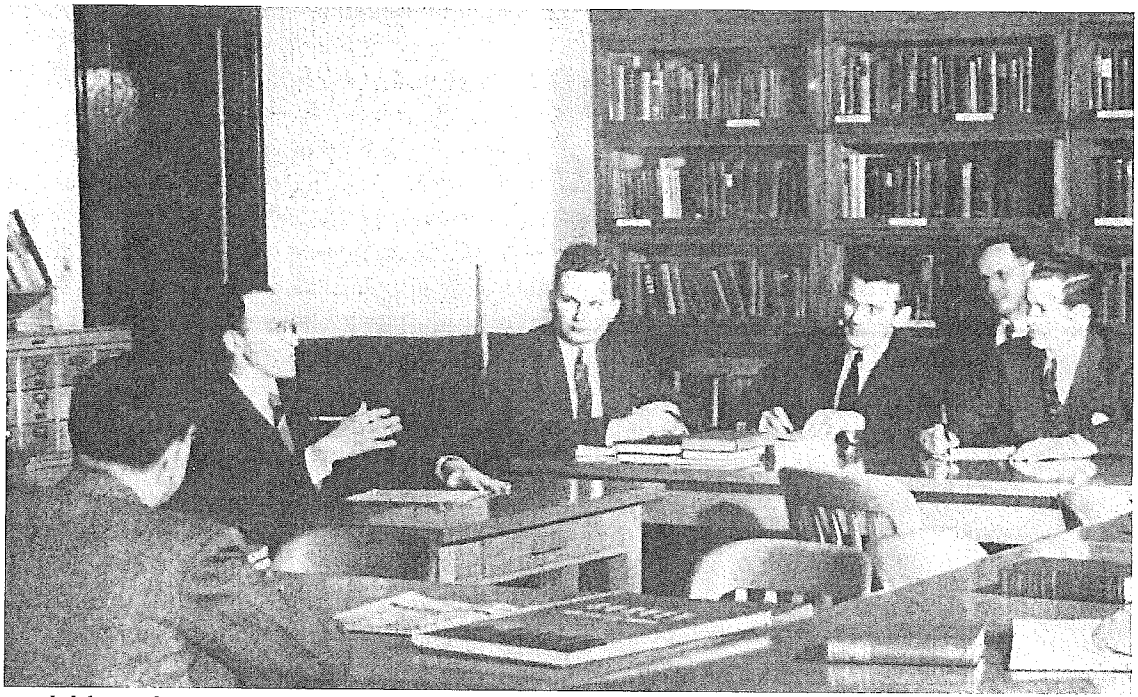
We landed in Shanghai. We were put in an apartment in a compound of the Presbyterians. Next door was Frank Price, a Southern Presbyterian, who later became a moderator of the church.[21] One of my first jobs was to help the loading of a ship by counting the stevedores as they went by and counting the pieces as they were loaded. I was accountable for moving a whole hospital's equipment up to Seoul, Korea. The army had brought it there to China and had sold it to the church.

My next job I was asked to do was for the Nationalist Chinese government. They were concerned about the people in the mills which they had taken over from the Japanese. What were the working conditions? What were the rights of the workers? They had gathered a team of Chinese professors. Somebody had suggested to them that they add me to the team. They told them I was a labor expert. So I joined this team of Chinese professors, not having a word of Chinese, to survey the working conditions in these factories. We visited one factory after another, spending a day in each one. The factory management would do their best to make a big impression on the study commission. They would set out a large round table with a great feast. I had never used chopsticks before, but I learned fast, or else I wouldn't eat. So I helped write the report of the study commission.

This was a great introduction to China. The National Christian Council had no work related to the industrial worker. They had no way to reach workers. I began to study all the history I could, everything I could get hold of in English. There were people who had an interest in industrial workers. There was a young lawyer in Shanghai who had written about labor law, largely based on British labor law. There were others who had an interest in other phases of the industrial problem. The Baptists had set up settlement houses. I began to draw up a list of all the people who might be interested in serving on a committee on industrial work under the National Christian Council.

I invited them to an organizing meeting. The committee was Chinese, both men and women. We met every month to design a program to reach out to industrial workers. We created a variety of material, posters, printed material for use with workers, hymns for workers, worship helps to celebrate Labor Sunday. We channeled our work through the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church. In many places it went into areas controlled by the Communists. The Communists were much closer at that time.

The chairman of our committee was an Episcopal layman, a journalist and editor of the *China Review*. The *China Review* had its beginning with a journalist who was impris-



Model for Industrial Missions: Rev. Marshal Scott (1909–1990), director, leads a class for ministers at the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations in the library of the Labor Temple, New York City, 1948. Photo: *Presbyterian Life* 1 (October 30, 1948): 5.

oned by the Japanese. He died in prison, but his son came back after the war and took up the paper again. He had been in the Secret Service group of the army and had worked with Ho Chi Minh.[22] He urged the U.S. government to work with Ho Chi Minh. He saw him as a revolutionary who wanted to free the Vietnamese from colonial domination. But, of course, that is not where we came out.

I married this man and his wife. Recently they were on T.V.'s "60 Minutes." They now live in San Francisco. He wrote me: "We still remember so well the wedding ceremony in your apartment in Shanghai. We still have the wedding ceremony we wrote under your direction. That means a great deal to us."

What I'm saying is that under the National Christian Council of China we had a good committee. There was on the staff of the council an Englishman who told the head of the commission: "This fellow Jones doesn't have any missionaries on his committee." I was called in and bawled out for not having missionaries on the committee. I told the director: "Missionaries are not going to be around much longer. I can see the handwriting on the wall. What we need to do is to convince the Chinese churches that this is what they should be doing. It is the Chinese working people that should be part of this sharing."

We organized all kinds of Chinese workers' groups and gave them the information which helped them teach others what the Christian faith meant to them. We organized groups in the post offices, in the factories, and in the banks. Wherever there were any Christian workers we organized groups around them.

Ministry in a Communist China

R.P.: If this was 1949 then the Communists were soon to take over Shanghai.

H.J.: That's right. The time came when they closed the American school and the embassy advised all "nonessential" people to return home. I will never forget the word "nonessential." Wives, children, and many staff people had to leave. We decided that my function was to continue—to stay with the church and see that it got turned over to the Chinese. The Chinese could carry on this work we were doing. It was a tough time—

to see my wife and my children go. It was the last day of 1949. I stayed until the middle of 1951.

I was in China a year and a half more. It was an important period in many senses. In the first place, many Chinese friends came to me and said: "Our home is your home. Anytime you want to come. Our home is open." Number two: the Russians came and helped "communize " the country. In 1950 I invited many of my friends to have a Christmas turkey dinner with me. There were among them factory workers, factory owners, textile mill operators. After dinner I asked them: "What do you think about these Russians? What's been happening at your place?" They were bitter. "What does a Russian know about making silk? Have they ever made any silk? Have they done any weaving? Do they know how to do this fine work? They are taking over. They're taking everything out of our places they can take." There was real bitterness.

The Baptists had a settlement house in the south end industrial area of the city. One of the consequences of the Communist victory was that many small Bible schools, which were all over North China, were closed. The students from the Bible schools came down to Shanghai and we took on the task of getting them jobs in the factories. "Mind you," we told them, "you're not going into these factories to preach. You're going in to be a Christian, and to live it—not to preach. We are all going to live together at the Baptist settlement house. We're going to meet together for supper and talk about our experiences in the factories. What did you learn? How did you share your faith by your life?" You can imagine those sessions. We had students in industry, right there in Shanghai, in 1950.

R.P.: Amazing. 1950 was the year Marshal Scott, as dean of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, was doing the same thing in Pittsburgh.[23] There were eighteen of us seminarians, who were members of that first "Ministers-in-Industry" in the summer of 1950, working in steel.

H.J.: In 1950, of course, the Communists were in charge of the city. If they had known what I was doing, I would have been in trouble. But I lived at home and traveled across the city on the streetcars. I think this experience of Bible school students working in the factories did more in making the church live than any single thing. They realized that witnessing to the Christian faith where you are in these little groups—that's the thing that made the church live. That's also the thing that has come through now [1982]. Have you seen the book by K. H. Ting, *How to Study the Bible*?[24] This is the Bible being recovered in China. Bible study is being continued from this early period. This is a New Testament printed in Shanghai which the government has given the paper on which to print. But it's on the old plates of the Bible Society of China. When we returned in 1979, I met the head of the former National Christian Council of China. He was the same one who bawled me out for having only Chinese on my industrial committee in 1949. He now writes me regularly. He is now under K. H. Ting, the organizer of the new Christian Council of China. He's part of the Three-Self Movement which got the People's Republic government to allocate paper in order to print the New Testament.

Return to the United States

R.P.: At the point at which you left China, did you come right back to the U.S. or did you stop off in Japan?

H.J.: I had an awful time getting permission to leave China. I had to go from Shanghai up to Peking, then to Tientsin where I got the boat. I sailed on the British-China Sea Line which had guards all over it, because of pirates. We took the ship to Hong Kong where I stayed a few days. I got a telegram in Hong Kong from New York saying: "Stop off in Japan to survey the situation. Determine whether we should start industrial work in Japan." I spent ten days traveling up and down Japan before I went to the airport.

I had been booked to speak about what was happening in China. I was talking at a center the U.S. Army had taken over. The congregation for U.S. Army personnel was