



## *Rachel A. Bradley*

Founder, Olive Branch Mission

*“God made our sister a chosen vessel to bare the waters of salvation to the thirsty lips of the lost and fallen.”*

The earliest beginnings of Olive Branch Mission date back to 1867 when sewing classes and other ministry began in the Morgan Street Free Methodist Church. Later, at the St. Charles Free Methodist camp meeting in June of 1873, according to an observer, “a tall, queenly-looking” Rachel Bradley, “was being labored with, in order that she might be led into an experience of the deeper things of God.” This same observer describes meeting Rachel Bradley a short time later at the Morgan Street Free Methodist Church:

*“She was much changed in appearance. Her garments were no longer worldly and the haughty look and air had been supplanted by a meek and quiet spirit. Rachel Bradley was now Sister Bradley. She was, I soon found, deeply interested in the poor and needy, and was carrying on mission work among them - distributing food and clothing, and conducting a sewing school in the Church on Saturdays.*

*She felt that the Lord would have her open a mission; and what the Lord prompts us or leads us to do, is always successful. She said, ‘I am looking for a vacant room on the North side.’ She found one, and the Wells Street (Bradley) Mission was opened.”*

Another historical account describes the 1876 formal organizing meeting of the Olive Branch Mission. This account was recorded in handwritten letter dated November 1932, from eyewitness Sister Templeton-Ryan of St. Charles, Illinois.

*“I went to the official opening of the Wells Street (Bradley) Mission (later renamed the Olive Branch Mission) of our dear Sister Rachael A. Bradley. It was a long room with a long table about 15 or 16 feet long. If the Spirit of God fell on us that day it was to be decided that it was of God, as some in the Morgan Street Free Methodist Church tried to discourage her. That was the only Free Methodist Church in Chicago at the time and she was a member. So it was to be decided that Sunday afternoon, if God poured out His Spirit on the meeting, that it was of God for her to start the mission by faith. As there was no money to carry on the work with, it was to be a faith mission. And of a truth, the Spirit of God was poured out on us all. I thought that God was going to carry me away, my feet hardly touched the floor as I flew around that long table with my hands up, shouting and praising God. It was decided that Sunday afternoon that it was of God. The Morgan Street Free Methodist Church as a whole, promised to help her with the mission work of that faith mission, and so instead of opposing her, they went to work with her and helped her all they could. ...all the church was exhorted to go and help out with the mission work. I heard Sister Bradley testify many times that she was called to the work, but at times shrank from it, as there was no money for anything, to pay rent with or to live on. It was a faith mission and God showed the Morgan Street Free Methodist Church that it was a faith mission and Sister Bradley was our first missionary.”*

*Rachel A. Bradley* continued...

Rev. C. B. Ebey spoke of his parishioner Rachel Bradley:

*“God made our sister a chosen vessel to bare the waters of salvation to the thirsty lips of the lost and fallen. Many were her trials and conflicts as she toiled on. Severer were her testings than you have ever dreamed of; yet amid that which was heart-crushing and soul-rendering, she kept true to God and her work. Many will rise up in the last days and praise God for this mission, and that Rachel Bradley was ever allowed to tell them of Jesus and His love.”*

Rather than ministering to the poor and then retreating to her wealthy birthright, Rachel Bradley used up her wealth and even her life as she lived in the mission with only a curtain separating her quarters from the ministry hall. There she shared the food, the air and ultimately the sickness of Chicago's skid row district, eventually succumbing to the ravages of tuberculosis. However, not before she had rooted Olive Branch Mission in the heart of Chicago. After 26 years of ministry on the front lines, Rachel Bradley died in 1893. From its earliest beginnings in 1867, Olive Branch Mission has continued to reach out to help those who have lost their way, find **The Way** through the life-transforming and soul-saving love of Jesus.

---

## Wanted – A Worker

*Katie V. Hall*

Sister Katie Hall was the “official” poet of the mission.  
Superintendent, 1939 – 1952

This poem wonderfully captures the spirit and heart of Rachel Bradley and so many workers who poured out their lives in obedience to the Calling of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, even unto death.

Wanted – a worker, true-hearted and loyal,  
Who fears neither cold nor the hot, burning sun,  
Who counts it an honor to sacrifice comfort  
And thinks not of rest when the fight has begun.

Wanted – a worker who's careless of glory,  
Who seeks not for praises, for rank, or for gold,  
Their only ambition to build up God's kingdom,  
Their greatest desire that the truth shall be told.

Wanted – a worker, a brave, loving worker –  
From every direction the call can be heard!  
Wanted – a worker, the echo is flying!  
Who'll carry the message – the life-giving Word?

Wanted – a worker right here in the homeland,  
Where millions are dying in shame and in sin;  
Oh, where are the reapers? The harvest is waiting,  
Who'll bind up the sheaves and gather them in?

Calling, yes, calling – our own precious homeland,  
Whose great, loving heart welcomes alien and son;  
Oh, list to the cry of her millions now dying,  
Send out brave soldiers; there's work to be done.

Wanted, yes, wanted – a worker of mettle,  
Filled with God's Spirit, clothed with His might,  
One who will stand when the foe seems triumphant,  
Who conquers by faith in every hard fight.

Wanted – a worker who sees in the lowest,  
Fair jewels of worth for the Master who died,  
Who reaches a hand to the homeless and fallen,  
And leads them in tenderest love to His side.

Wanted – a worker who cares for God's Zion,  
And shepherds the sheep and the lambs of His love,  
Who shields from the furious wolves that are howling  
And guides to the evergreen pastures above.