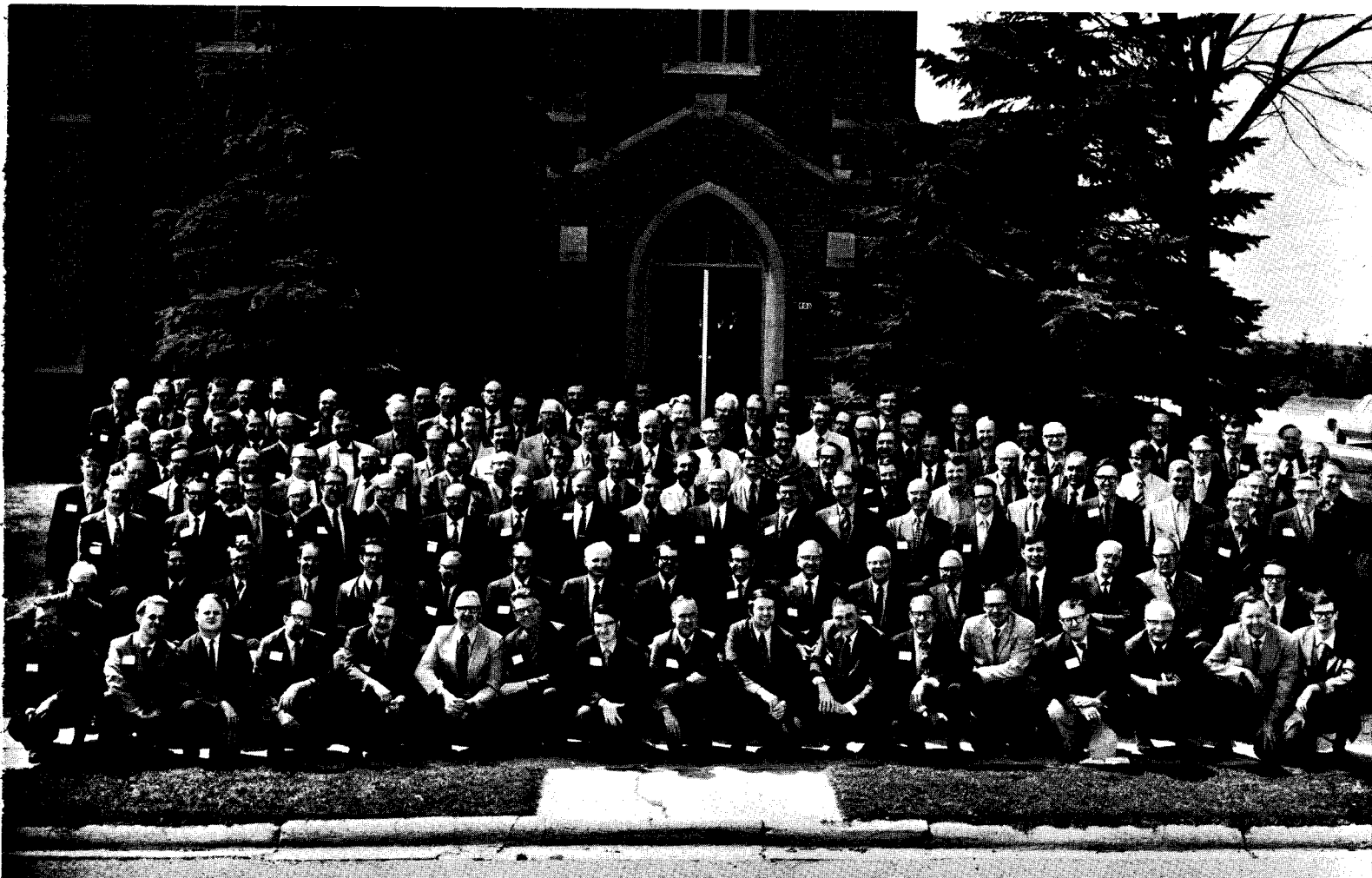


The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 41, NO. 6 — JUNE/JULY, 1972



THIRTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Oostburg, Wisc., May 15-20, 1972

Letter from Aunt Polly

Dear young friends,

Thank you for your recent letters. We are especially glad for the questions you've asked. They help us to know what you are interested in. And we are very happy to know that our letters have been a "reminder" to keep you more faithful in prayer for the work the Lord has sent us here to do. We hope the Lord Jesus may continue to use these "reminders" to this end. Isn't it wonderful how God helps remind us to obey his command to pray? We want to tell you about one such "reminder" that he has given us. It is a sound.

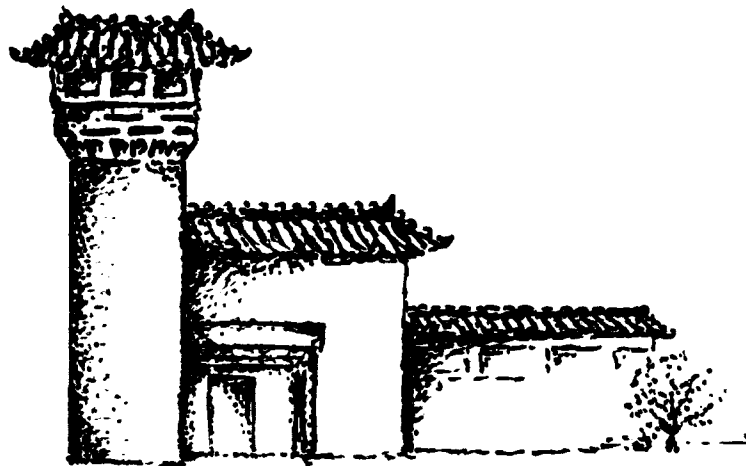
Bon-n-ng, bon-n-ng, bon-n-ng — slowly bon-n-ng twenty-four times. Seven days a week, morning and evening on the dot of six o'clock the first bon-n-ng sounds forth. High in a belltower a wooden beam, hanging from a rope, is thrust by hand against a great brass bell to make the bon-n-ng sounds. We can walk from our house to the belltower in about five minutes. We are so near that we can hear the bon-n-ngs very clearly. They are part of a fifteen-minute, morning and evening prayer ritual that takes place in the temple beside the belltower. Nevertheless, the Lord uses the sound to remind us of how much we need to pray!

One morning before six o'clock, Uncle Dick and I walked to the temple grounds to see what happened when the bell went bon-n-ng. Inside of the temple there are many images of the various gods worshipped on Taiwan. There are several idols of the Buddha and of the Goddess of Mercy. All the idols are sitting on pedestals suitable for their sizes.

When we arrived some nuns and several priests, all with shaven heads, were there dressed in their black gowns. There were also several women who took part in the ceremony. As soon as the first bon-n-ng sounded, small bells began to tinkle and cymbals clang. The nuns and priests, with their lay helpers, chanted prayers and heathen writings as they walked from one idol to another. When the twenty-fourth bon-n-ng stopped sounding, they all stopped chanting and took off their ceremonial robes.

A tulip for an idol

Some people from the neighborhood came to



worship during the ceremony. A few of them brought gifts to offer. Several gave gifts of money to an old nun who sat behind a desk by the large front door. She wrote out a receipt for each one who gave money. Others brought fruit and placed it on the ledge of the pedestal of a god. Perhaps they hoped to receive some special favor from the god that morning. The people think that each idol has its particular power to help or influence men.

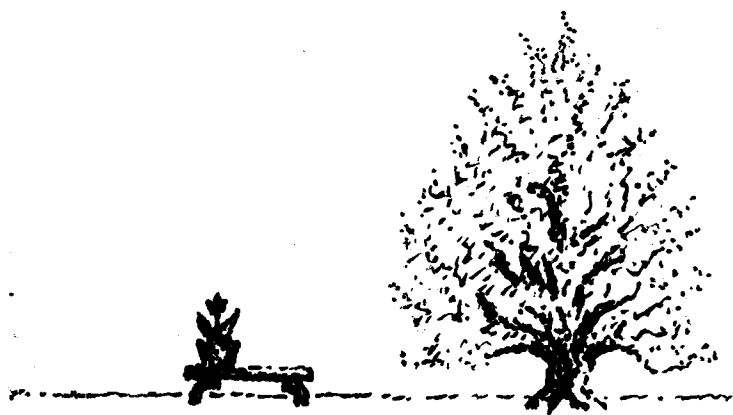
When the ceremony ended most of the offerings of fruit were taken away by the worshippers. But one lady who had brought a plate of loquats (a fruit similar to a plum) handed them to a young nun. She thanked the lady and took the fruit to the rooms on the side of the temple where the nuns live.

And one elderly man came in bringing a blossoming tulip in a pot. This is the only tulip we have seen on Taiwan. Possibly he grew it as a special gift to the god of his choice.

When the worshippers had placed their offerings in front of an idol, they would stand erect in front of it. Some placed their hands palm to palm in a reverent manner and mumbled a prayer. Others grasped incense sticks in both hands and waved them up and down before the idol as they prayed.

We did not enjoy the trip to the temple. It is indeed sad to see such worship because it is really worship of the Devil. Paul told the Corinthians this

The Presbyterian Guardian is published ten times each year, every month except for combined issues in June-July and August-September, by the Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126, at the following rates, payable in advance, postage prepaid: \$3.75 per year (\$3.25 in clubs of ten or more; special rate for "every-family churches" on request). Second class mail privileges authorized at the Post Office, Philadelphia, Pa.



long ago (1 Corinthians 10:20). But we hope in the love of God who has turned many through the years from worshipping idols to serving the true and living God.

We have told you about our dear friend, Mrs. Bien, and Nurse Huang, who went for years from one temple to another worshipping idols. But they found no peace until your missionaries told them that Jesus is the way to God. So when we hear the bon-n-ng from the belltower, we pray that the Lord will call

out many more from the idol-worshipping world.

A lovely story, called *God's Bridge*, tells of a Chinese lady who had very great troubles. (The story is by Miss Tena Holkeboer, a sister of the Rev. Oscar Holkeboer, and it was published by Eerdmans in 1944. Both Miss Holkeboer and her brother have gone to be with the Lord, and the book itself is out of print. But you may find a copy of it in your church library.) This lady, named Jin-Gi, felt so helpless that she fell down on the hard mud floor of a temple, her forehead touching the ground, and cried out in her agony to an idol. She asked that a bridge might be prepared for her and her only son so that they might cross over from the bitter life they were forced to live.

Soon afterward our Lord Jesus sent a man right to her door, and he told her about the bridge that God had already prepared, Jesus the Savior. I hope you can read this story, especially if you are thinking about what you ought to do with the years of your life that you have yet to live for your Lord.

We hope that you have a good summer vacation and that you will use some of your free time to pray for all of us over here. Job Lee and Wilbur Chang will be selling Christian books here, and you can pray that some of them may help idol-worshippers to come and worship the living and true God.

Lovingly,

Aunt Polly and Uncle Dick

UPUSA Assembly Rejects COCU

Denver — In a 411-310 vote, and much to the surprise of all, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., withdrew from further participation in the Consultation on Church Union (COCU). The decision ends over ten years of active leadership in the attempt to form a superchurch of mainline (and largely liberal) Protestant denominations.

First suggested by the then Stated Clerk of the UPUSA, Eugene Carson Blake, in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral of Episcopal Bishop James L. Pike, the proposal was known as the "Blake-Pike Plan." Before the UPUSA pullout, COCU involved nine denominations.

Hints of trouble had already been heard, including a sharply critical note from the United Church of Christ. Blake himself, in an interview at Whittier, California in early April, noted the

criticisms, but reaffirmed his continuing support for the plan.

The General Assembly's vote came in response to an overture from the Presbytery of Philadelphia that sharply criticized COCU but did not seek a breaking off of participation. But the Assembly, after readily beating down efforts to soften the move, opted for a complete severance from COCU.

Conservatives within the United Presbyterian Church will undoubtedly rejoice at this turn of events; but it can hardly be viewed as their own victory. This same Assembly adopted the usual radical resolutions, condemning the war and condoning "abortion on demand." The vote against COCU, rather than a conservative reaction against liberal ecumania, seems to be more the result of disdain for "The Establishment"—of which COCU would be one of the most convoluted church struc-

tures anywhere. There was also a large measure of fear that COCU's plan of union would destroy self-determination in local churches.

Dr. William A. Benfield Jr., fraternal delegate from the Presbyterian Church, U. S. ("Southern"), called the decision a "betrayal of trust." But it seems more likely that the action will make it easier—by removing one of the conservatives' major objections — to promote a PCUS-UPUSA merger. Liberal leaders in the United Presbyterian Church voiced concern over the break-off, and there were hints that efforts to reverse the decision would be made at next year's Assembly.

Whatever the outcome then, it is rather exciting to see the ecumenists beaten on what they had long considered to be safe territory. But the vote can hardly be seen as indicating any return to the historic heritage of the Presbyterian tradition.

To the *Stay-at-Home* Christian

Dear brother in Christ,

I address you as brother because you say you believe in Jesus. You say you are trusting in Christ alone for your eternal salvation.

If this is true, then you also believe the Bible is the Word of God, and so you agree that you *must* believe what God teaches in it and do what he commands in it. For if you love Christ, you will keep his commands (John 14:15; 15:10).

When Christ was here on earth he chose twelve disciples. He trained them and organized them to do the work of his kingdom (Matthew 10:1, 7). Our Lord did not fail in his kingdom labors, for he arose victorious from the grave.

Then Christ placed upon his disciples the continuing work of his kingdom (Matthew 28:18-20). He sent his Holy Spirit to help and guide them in that task (John 15:26, 27; Acts 2). Paul, being inspired by that Holy Spirit, clearly says all this (in Ephesians 2:20), and he urges the believers in Ephesus to live together in family and in church as true followers of Christ.

Or, to put it briefly:

Christ established the church — not man.

Christ organized the church — not man.

Christ empowered the church — not man.

The church is God's way, not man's. And if the church is God's way, should you not be in a church?

"There's too much bickering in the church!"

Well, if there's any at all it's too much. On the other hand, this is not exactly a new problem either. The church in Corinth, a church founded by an apostle, was full of jealous bickering. But Paul never suggests in the slightest that they all go off by themselves.

No, even those Corinthian believers, as quarrelsome as they were, all were part of the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). Since there was no heresy involved, they were urged to resolve their difficulties by submitting themselves to the Word of God. To refuse to have fellowship with other believers is to deny that you are one with them in Christ. To refuse to worship together and to seek the Lord's will together is to refuse to follow God's way.

God knows that we need one another. As a member of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:15, 16), each of us has something to contribute. We are all fitly joined together — or we should be. We are all part of one spiritual building, which in the New Testament always found expression in a local church. This was no accident or human invention! God planned it that way.

"I can worship God anywhere!"

Well, why can't you worship God at home? You can and should worship God at home and everywhere. But you must *also* worship — regularly — with the other believers. Why? Because that is God's way. The church is his idea not man's.

But if God wants us to worship together, you say, why hasn't he said so in the Bible? But he has! He tells us that

when we worship, all things are to be done to edify the believers and done in an orderly organized way (1 Corinthians 14:26, 40).

We are to sing together in our worship (Colossians 3:16). We are to bring our gifts and offerings to God on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). Now if these things were displeasing to God, or even unessential for believers, God would certainly have said so. But Paul — still speaking by inspiration of the Spirit — simply assumes that no Christian needs to be urged to join in public worship. All they need is to be told how God wants it done (1 Timothy 3:15).

It is clear from the New Testament that Christians met together for public worship regularly. They did what pleased God. Indeed, if we refuse to do this, God condemns us (Hebrews 10:25). So you see, you *can* worship God at home or in the woods, or riding to work. But that is not all there is to worship. If it is done according to God's will and design, there must be regular worship together with other Christians.

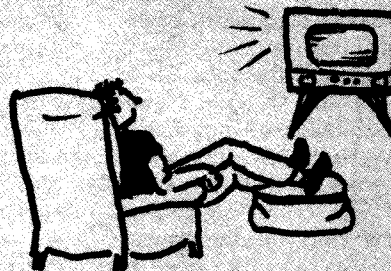
"We worship in an informal group."

That can be a very helpful thing indeed. But aren't you also saying that Christians don't really need to have an organized church? Isn't it enough for us to get together informally for worship?

No, that is not enough, because it is not a church according to the blueprints God has given. A church, according to the New Testament plans, is to be organized, even to the extent of having elders (Titus 1:5) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). To be a New Testament church, every congregation should have at least one elder to serve as a teacher and preacher of God's Word (1 Timothy 5:17-22).

In other words, each local church is a section in the body

MODERN SADDUCEE No. 247



"STAND UP! STAND UP FOR JE-SUS"

of Christ, a section with various specialized cells of its own. The teacher is to teach (Ephesians 4:11, 12) and rule (1 Timothy 5:17). And the members are to be in subjection to the rule of the elders (Hebrews 13:17). They are given to the church to rule over it for Christ himself. If you do not belong to an organized church, you are not really being ruled by Christ as he meant for you to be.

God also told the church to take care of those who are in need within the household of faith (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27). To do this, we are told to choose deacons to carry our gifts to those in need (Acts 6:1-8; Timothy 3:8-13). You say you are giving to help fellow Christians in need? But are you doing it through the agency God ordained — the deacons of the church? This is God's way for us to do it; do not despise his commandment!

"I can learn God's will for myself!"

Can't you just learn by yourself, studying the Bible without being confused by some preacher? You can learn by yourself, and you should. In fact, it's quite essential that you do if you are to know a true church of God when you enter one.

You are responsible to belong to a true church. But there are so many different kinds of churches today. By comparing what they teach and do with what the Bible says, you should and can avoid the false voices. Does this or that church teach what is in the Bible? Do they practice the sacraments correctly? Do they exercise discipline, guiding and correcting their members to pull them back from sin, or even excluding those who refuse to turn away from their sin?

Yes, you are to learn from your Bible even though you are a member of a church. You, as a member of the body, have a duty to keep a check on what is taught there, to work with others to keep that church true to God's Word. But God did give teachers to the church (Ephesians 4:11, 12). He must have had a reason, and he surely expects them to teach and the rest of the church to learn.

You can't say, according to the Bible, that you are studying the Bible as God commanded — unless you are receiving the teaching of one of God's appointed teachers. To be sure, the preacher may confuse you — if you are already confused! But Christ, the Head of every true church (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:15, 16), is not the source of confusion; and it is Christ who has given men to be his chosen servants to teach his people in the church.

"The church is full of hypocrites!"

What about those hypocrites? After all, you may well be as good as or better than many members of the church. And no one would deny that there are some hypocrites in the church. It's easy to scorn such people; but if Christ loved you (of all people!), shouldn't you have some concern for them?

Some of the hypocrites in the church may be unbelievers — in which case they really need your help to see their urgent need for a Savior. Or they may be weak brethren in Christ who need your help and strength and prayers to grow

up in the faith. (Of course, if a church is really full of hypocrites, then it is no real church of Christ at all. But in that case, your concern is to find a church that does truly belong to Christ.)

God makes it clear that Christians are to have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3), in the organized church (Ephesians 4:15, 16). If you love Christ, you must love and help your fellow believers — even when they seem to be hypocritical. In fact, if you do not love those whom God has loved and given his Son to die for, then your claim to be a Christian is the boast of a hypocrite and you are not really saved (1 John 4).

Just consider what you're actually saying: "I love my fellow Christians — but I don't want to get involved with them. I'm a member of God's family — but I don't care to be active in that family. I will pray for you — but not with you, please. I love you all — but I don't believe you are worthy of being trusted with my money or friendship. I love you — but I won't eat with you, or help you in your weaknesses, or feed you in your hunger. I'm part of Christ's body — but I don't really need you other members."

This is very foreign to the picture of Christians in the New Testament! They willingly sold everything they had in order to share it with the other believers (Acts 5). They loved one another because they all loved Christ who had first loved them (1 John 4). Oh, we may have our family problems in the church; but we are a family. If you are not involved in the church, can you be sure you are really saved? If you are not involved, you are a prodigal son who has not yet turned back, who has not come into the organized church which is the house of God (Ephesians 2:19).

* * * * *

We invite you to our church. It has elders, some to teach and others to rule, according to the Bible's plan. It has deacons to show mercy, and this too is according to the Bible's plan. Our church proclaims the whole Bible as God's Word, inspired by him and binding on all his people. We do discipline our members, and we are especially careful that no unbeliever or immature man is given the office of elder. We dispense the sacraments that Christ ordained, his supper and his baptism, according to the Bible.

You who belong to Christ also belong in the organized church of Christ. Do not despise the way of your Lord. It is God himself who established, organized, and empowered the church to serve his own purposes here on earth. He designed the church to please himself and for the sake of his people. Its activities are his activities — worship, the preaching of his Word, discipline, the sacraments, and fellowship with the saints and with the Lord himself.

Come into the church of Christ. If you love him, obey his command!

Dr. Coppes is pastor of the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Harrisville, Pennsylvania.

It is tempting to imagine that one has seen history in the making — only to discover that time soon erodes the landmarks. Still, at the risk of turning out to be a poor prophet, your reporter suggests that the 39th General Assembly did reach several crucial decisions that will affect the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for years to come.

The commissioners gathered in the Bethel Church of Oostburg, Wisconsin, on the evening of May 15, to be led in worship and the Lord's Supper by Dr. George W. Knight III, moderator of the 38th Assembly. Confronted by a heavy docket containing several items that would require strenuous discussion, the Assembly moved ahead to business the next morning. The Rev. Jack J. Peterson was chosen moderator, and succeeded in controlling

and keeping the Assembly pressing on.

Sessions of the Assembly began at 8 a.m. and lasted as late as 10 p.m. Several commissioners wilted under the strain and the unseasonably warm weather (95° at times). Except for the gracious care and hospitality of the people of Oostburg and Cedar Grove, the schedule — if not the commissioners — would have collapsed long before the Saturday afternoon conclusion.

What follows is a selection of those items of business that seem to be the most crucial ones. Despite the tensions, the little irritations, and the long hours, we all thank our God for the freedom we have to carry on the business of Christ's church, and we bow humbly before our Lord as we realize that he has called mortal, sinful men to rule in his church!

39th General Assembly

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

THE EDITOR

Stewardship Committee

Despite misgivings, including reluctance to enlarge the "bureaucracy" in Philadelphia, the Assembly adopted a proposal that effected a total reorganization of the Stewardship Committee. This committee, charged with presenting an annual "combined budget" for the committees on home and foreign missions and Christian education, had increasingly found itself unable to do more than add up the totals requested and shave them all down a bit. This year it was unable to do even that much and presented a combined budget total far exceeding any proposed before.

The new arrangement seeks to avoid several problems that plagued the old committee. The nine members are now to be chosen directly by the Assembly rather than having six of them appointed from the three major committees; this should relieve any possible "conflict of interest" as the Stewardship Committee considers the budget requests from these committees.

The new committee also has a clearer mandate. It is (1) "to support the ministry of the pastors and sessions in their responsibility to teach and encourage the practice of biblical stewardship in the church," by providing "counsel, assistance and literature." This can become a real help to local churches through suggestions of new ideas and effective methods.

The committee is also (2) "to develop both short and long range goals [elsewhere it is urged to prepare both one-year and five-year budgets] for the church's program as a denomination" and "recommend to the General Assembly financial priorities for the achievement" of these goals. In other words, this committee is charged to do what no one has been doing — look at all the work of the church's committees, weigh the various proposals, and suggest what priority each should have in the limited funds available.

To carry out its assignment the committee was authorized

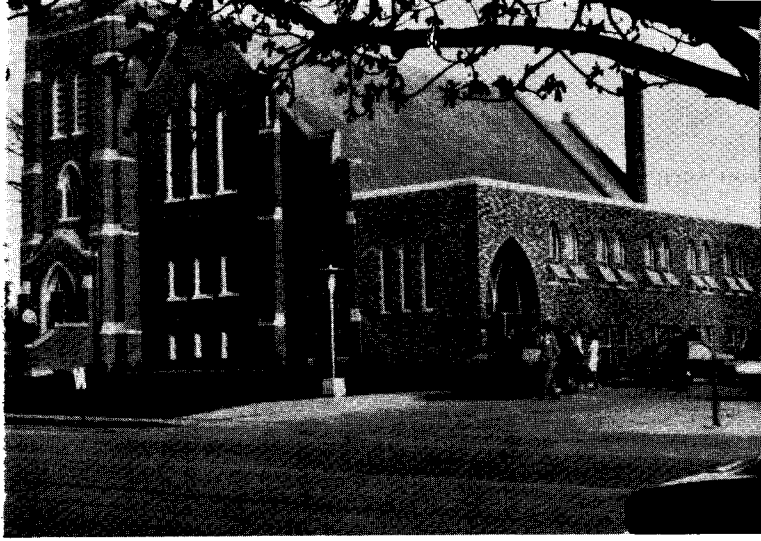
to employ a General Secretary. A similar proposal in the 1971 Assembly was soundly defeated. Apparently the urgency of the need convinced this year's commissioners that hiring of a staff was necessary. Finding the right man for so important and sensitive a position will be a major concern for the new committee.

The importance of the new committee was fully recognized and election to it was considered to be a priority demand on the individual's time. The Assembly elected a strong committee which should, if any committee can, carry out the heavy responsibilities given to it. Those elected (by year of expiration of their terms) are: 1975 — the Rev. Lawrence R. Eyres, Messrs. Clarence den Dulk and Lewis W. Roberts; 1974 — the Rev. Messrs. Robert W. Eckardt and Albert W. Steever, Jr. and Mr. John O. Kinnaird; 1973 — the Rev. Edward L. Kellogg and Messrs. Robert A. Kramm and Daniel B. Stuke; *Alternates* — the Rev. Messrs. Richard G. Hodgson and Stephen L. Phillips, and Messrs. Frederick C. Metzger and Calvin A. Duff.

Combined Budget

Closely related to the reorganization of the Stewardship Committee, and partly explaining the Assembly's willingness to take so far-reaching a step, was the presentation of the proposed "Combined Budget" by the old Stewardship Committee. The total proposed from Orthodox Presbyterian giving was \$531,000, compared with a total for 1972 of \$494,000 and actual giving of only \$393,000 in 1971. This proposed total is the simple sum of the budget requests made by the committees on home and foreign missions and Christian education.

The large majority of commissioners to the Assembly felt that such a total was completely unrealistic. It was also generally agreed that approval of any total was in effect a



Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Oostburg, Wis., host to 39th General Assembly, May 15 - 20, 1972



Newly elected moderator, Jack J. Peterson, receives gavel from George W. Knight, outgoing moderator.

promise to provide the funds themselves. Since the total was not likely to be reached even with the most strenuous efforts, the Assembly spent long hours of debate trying to decide what it should do. The need for a Stewardship Committee that could probe into requested budgets and suggest priorities was readily apparent.

After various attempts to reduce the total, including some rather unusual parliamentary efforts to "fill in the blank," the Assembly finally approved a total "combined budget" from Orthodox Presbyterians of \$460,000, a figure itself that may be difficult to realize. The Assembly left it to the new Stewardship Committee to enlarge the approved budgets if it thought the amounts likely to be given would warrant it, determine the amount each committee would receive out of the total, while urging the churches to reach toward the original \$531,000 figure.

The results of this decision will be almost certain curtailment in some areas of the work of missions and Christian education. Approval of the larger amount would have meant eventual curtailment anyway as funds failed to come in; but operating under a more realistic budget total will mean the committees will not extend themselves in hiring new personnel only to drop them later.

Comment: In the report of the (old) Stewardship Committee, it was noted that the \$531,000 total could be reached if every communicant member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church gave slightly over \$1 per week to the denomination's evangelistic programs. Obviously not every communicant member is a wage-earner or otherwise able to do this. But others of us are able to do this much and more. It would be one of the most exciting and encouraging events in the history of the church if that total could be reached. The Lord is able to provide; are we ready to give?

Representative Assembly

Since last year's Assembly, seven presbyteries (of eleven) had acted to approve an amendment to the Form of Government that would permit the Assembly to limit its size. Such proposals had been made before but had failed to pass, largely because of the feeling that a young church needed to allow the largest possible representation at the General Assembly.

But recent years have seen the size of the Assembly grow

until the host churches have found it almost impossible to feed and house the multitude. Also with so many commissioners present, it has been difficult to allow for full debate of some issues.

Though the amendment to the Form of Government was only permissive in character, the Assembly went ahead to institute the new system for next year. The provisions as adopted will provide for a maximum of 155 commissioners, and individual presbyteries will select representatives on a proportional basis. The number of minister-commissioners will be based on the number of ministers of each presbytery's roll; elder-commissioners will be based on the number of congregations within the presbytery. The Assembly's Stated Clerk will inform each presbytery of the number of each to be elected, basing the numbers on the latest statistical reports available.

The new rules do not permit a presbytery to elect a minister to fill its quota of elder-commissioners, nor is the reverse procedure permitted. This should result in some pressure to secure more elders at the Assembly — which in itself would be a major gain under the new system. How a presbytery determines whom to send is left to the presbytery. In many cases it will work out that those ministers who really want to attend will probably be chosen. But finding elders able to take time off to go will be more difficult. Surely some provision for compensation for lost wages will have to be sought in the future.

Form of Government Proposals

Besides the amendment to permit a representative Assembly, there were two other proposals concerning the church's Form of Government. (These were reported in some detail in the March issue of the *Guardian*.)

Briefly, the first proposal sought to set forth the New Testament teaching concerning office in the church. It would declare that the church has two main offices, that of the elder and of the deacon. It would also recognize three main areas of ministry, that of the Word, of rule, and of mercy. And it further saw a distinction within the office of elder between those who rule and those who also labor in word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17).

The second proposal sought to give some answer to the concern of many to provide for local church membership by

ministers (who at present are members of the presbyteries). The proposal, though it maintained ministerial membership in the presbytery, opened the way for local sessions — with the agreement of both the presbytery and the man involved — to permit a minister certain privileges of membership in the local church. Basic jurisdiction over the minister would remain in the presbytery, but a more direct involvement in the local church would also be possible.

Somewhat to the surprise of many, the Assembly approved both of these proposals by significantly large majorities. It should be noted, however, that *this approval does not change the present Form of Government*. What it did do was to indicate the Assembly's approval "in principle" of the proposals and thus clear the way for the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government to work out the implications in its proposed revision.

A final draft of a new Form of Government could be presented to next year's Assembly incorporating these two proposals. More likely the committee will need another year to work out all the interlocking details. Still, the Assembly's action does give some promise that a revised Form of Government may yet be adopted by the church.

The Sabbath Question

With a docket so crowded with major decisions, many of which consumed hours of discussion and debate, the Assembly was faced with the need either to postpone items or give them less attention than they deserved. Of those items calling for lengthy discussion, the report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters was one that could be reasonably postponed. Members of the committee agreed that it was better to postpone the discussion than to hold it under the pressure of restricted time.

The Assembly agreed to this and placed the report on next year's docket at a point early enough to permit adequate discussion. Despite the disappointment felt at not concluding a matter that concerns us all, it was generally agreed that careful discussion was preferable if the final resolution of the matter was to find general acceptance in the church.

Updating the Language of the Confession

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the "Covenanters") had invited other Reformed bodies holding the Westminster Standards to join with it in

a project to update the language of the Confession and Catechisms. The aim is not to change any of the doctrines taught, but solely to improve the rather archaic terminology of the documents.

The Assembly readily accepted the invitation, apparently convinced that such a revision was worthwhile. It remains to be seen whether a revision will gain general acceptance or in what way; perhaps it could serve as an authorized version while the original forms remain the constitutional standards of the churches.

Revisions of the Westminster Standards, including limited amendments at various points, have been made before. But those that sought to subject all the documents to revision have ended up with new confessions with new — and largely un-Reformed — doctrines. But if the attempt to update the language without changing the doctrines is successful, it could do much to make the Reformed doctrines of sovereign grace more understandable for today.

The Assembly chose the Rev. Messrs. Herbert S. Bird, Robert B. Strimple, and Calvin A. Busch to the Committee on Linguistic Revision to the Westminster Standards, to join with others in the project.

Relations with the Christian Reformed Church

Relations with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, may be moving toward an actual merger (earliest possible date, Spring 1974). But the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has also been in conversation with the Christian Reformed Church concerning a possible merger.

Initially these talks found the main difficulty in the road to merger to be in the area of church order or government. In particular, the authority given to Synodical or Assembly decisions was felt to be a major difference.

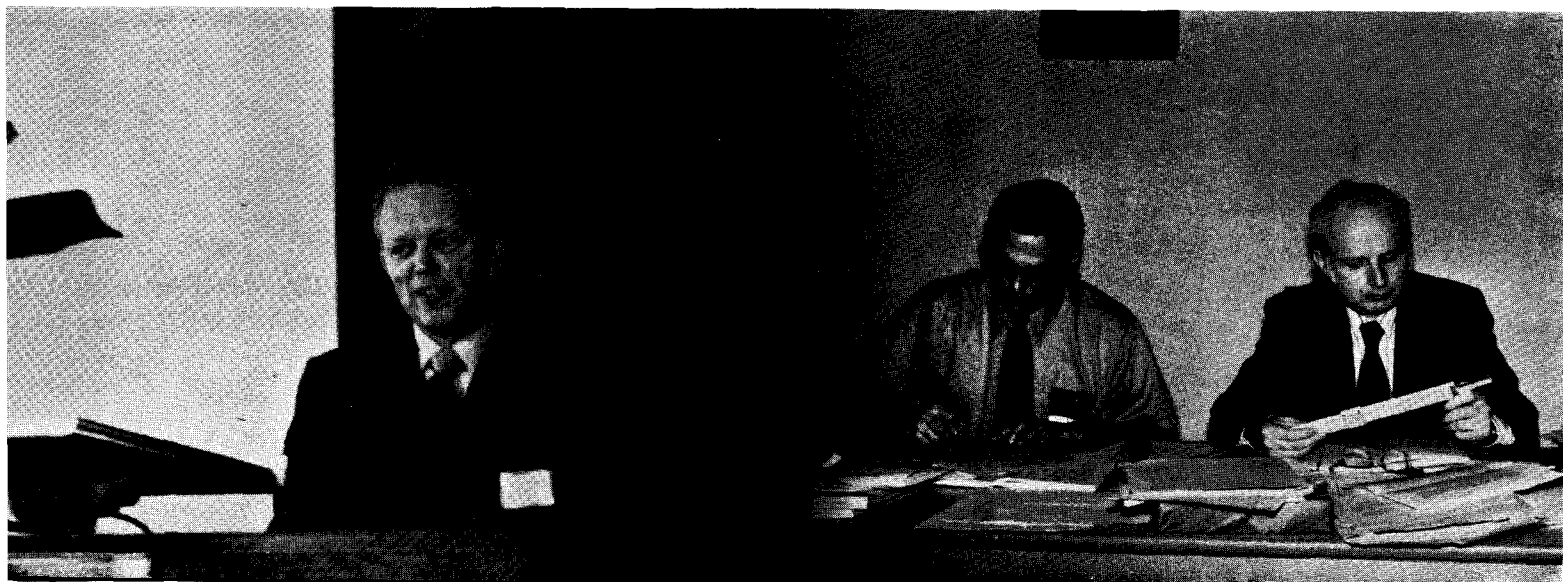
The Christian Reformed representatives in these talks report that decisions of their Synod are considered "settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order" (Church Order, Art. 29). It was explained that this did not bind the conscience, but that once decisions were reached members were not to act in open defiance of them; but they were free to seek changes through orderly procedures.

Orthodox Presbyterians do insist (Westminster Confession, Ch. XXXI, 3) that decisions of the church's highest

(Continued on Page 91)

Dr. Robert G. Rayburn brings fraternal greetings from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

Stated Clerk Richard A. Barker (right) working with Assistant Clerk Stephen L. Phillips.



PROPOSED BASIS OF UNION between THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH and THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, EVANGELICAL SYNOD

I. Preamble

The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are churches in the United States of America having one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. In determining to unite in one Scriptural order and to remove every barrier to full fellowship in the service of Christ, these churches come acknowledging both God's grace and their sins in days past and trusting to the renewal of the Holy Ghost for days to come.

They would first make mention of what Christ has wrought in their confession and service.

Both churches come rejoicing in one Sovereign Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Both churches believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Both churches therefore have sought to be obedient to Scripture in teaching and life, in order and worship. Because the inspiration and divine authority of Scripture have been questioned and denied within the professing church, the acknowledgement of the Bible to be the Word of God written is the more necessary for those who would stand today in the apostolic gospel: "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

These two churches have a common background in our struggle to maintain the clear teachings of the Word of God that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, worked mighty miracles, offered up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God, that on the third day he rose again from the dead with the same body with which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession.

Modernism, old and new, in denying these doctrines and the infallibility of the Word that teaches them, denies the Lord of the Word and casts aside the scepter of his rule in his church. Since the fellowship of the church of Jesus Christ must be grounded in the truth the spread of apostasy brings division. Our churches exist because we have chosen to obey God rather than man in conflict with false teaching in the church.

Yet in opposing such denials of doctrines essential to the Word of God and our secondary standards, these churches

have not reduced the whole counsel of God to a few fundamentals of Christian faith.

Rather with the renewal of obedience to the Word of God there has come a renewal of rejoicing in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. Both churches have adopted the Confession of Faith in virtually identical form, a form that precedes the modifying amendments made to the Confession by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1903. The two churches have one Confession, a Confession that expresses the glorious fullness of the Reformed Faith, declaring without equivocation that salvation is of the Lord. *Soli deo gloria!*

New obedience to the revelation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ has kindled new desire for holy living. Both churches have manifested deep concern that Christians be not conformed to this world in an age of license, but rather be transformed into the image of Christ. These churches have turned again to the law of God, believing that contemporary immorality springs not only from the lusts of the flesh but also from hatred of the truth. The apostasy that casts off the authority of God's Word of commandment revealed in Scripture is at the last more destructive than guilty sensuality.

Because both churches teach obedience to the revealed commandments of Christ they have also sought to apply these specific commandments to modern life.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has called attention to the specific instruction of our subordinate standards, particularly the Larger Catechism, on the requirements of the Word of God for holy living. The Westminster Larger Catechism so applies the Ten Commandments, warning that each commandment implies the specific forbidding of all sins of that kind, "together with all the causes, means, occasions and appearances thereof and provocations thereunto" (Q. 99).

The plan for the union of the Reformed Presbyterian Church with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, contained a declaration on the Christian life in which the united church emphasized the applicability of God's commandments to questions of conduct and practice that arise in the modern world.

The acknowledgement of Scripture as the infallible rule of faith and life has therefore borne fruit in both these

churches in specific exposition and application of the Bible to learn what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. In life as in faith the rule of the Word of God is both specific and inclusive. As the church is led into all truth by the Word, so is it led into all righteousness: whatever we do, individually in our hearts, together in our homes and communities, or corporately in the church of Christ, we are to do to the glory of God.

In uniting their witness, these churches would seek to grow in love and new obedience to Christ, finding in that obedience the remedy for both legalism and antinomianism. We dare not build a hedge around God's law, adding to it the burdensome traditions of men. Neither may we ever cease to hear in the law the voice of the living God, whose will and nature are revealed in his commandments. Yet respect for the liberty of the sons of God must not dampen our pastoral zeal to warn those in our charge against particular sins and against those practices in contemporary life that become frequent occasions of sin. When the mass media pander to unlawful sexual appetites, the Saviour's warning about the lustful look must be part of the church's instruction. When respect for human life is cheapened by glorified violence or when the proper function of the body is impaired through narcotics, stimulants, and hallucinogenic drugs, the church must teach that our bodies are for the Lord and oppose those who exploit for gain those desires that rebel against God's ordinances for human life. Apart from the courageous application of Scripture to individual and social sins in the context of modern life the church cannot fulfill the whole ministry of the Word of God. As the occasion demands, such application must be made not only by pastors and sessions, but also by presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies according to the principles of Chapter 31 of the Confession of Faith ("of Synods and Councils"), which are based upon the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). The forming of Christian consciences to prove the things that differ is most necessary so that the church shall not be conformed to the lawlessness of an unbelieving world.

Nowhere does the direction of the Word of God appear more clearly in the witness of these churches than in the work of missions and evangelism. Not only do the doctrines of grace require the seeking of the lost by those who are drawn by the Son of God to know the Father's heart of mercy; the express command of the arisen Saviour sends his disciples to the ends of the world and the end of the age. In obedience to Christ's Great Commission the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church have carried forward constantly expanding missionary programs at home and abroad. Concern for the soundness of the missionary message in the former Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. led to the establishment of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, and to the division that was forced upon those who refused to surrender that testimony. In the work of World Presbyterian Missions of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Committee on Foreign Missions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church the cause of truly Presbyterian missions has prospered. More than one hundred and ten missionaries now serve in thirteen countries with the support of these agencies. In addition, the gospel is preached by more than thirty-six men supported at least

in part by corresponding home mission agencies. Evangelism is also served by the printed word through the labors of our committees on Christian education.

In contrast to the secularized evangelism that would substitute political action for the proclamation of Christ's kingdom, the Biblical evangelism to which these churches are committed recognizes that Christ must be obeyed in his program; that the gospel must be preached to all nations, and that until he comes only the sword of the Spirit may be wielded in his name. These churches have sought to manifest the compassion of Christ by deeds of mercy and to proclaim the gospel of Christ by words of power, but the power they claim is spiritual. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh; (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of . . .) imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God . . ." (II Corinthians 10:3-5).

In so speaking of the witness of our churches we know that we have nothing that we have not received and that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. We would therefore with lowliness, meekness, forbearance, and long suffering give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To this end we of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church would remove every wall of partition that divides us, manifesting in one fellowship of order and service that unity under the Word of Christ that we profess as members of his body.

We do confess that all saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith have fellowship with him in his grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and, being united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces. As God now offers to us opportunity we would assume the obligation of our profession to extend and maintain toward one another a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, in performing such other spiritual services as tend to our mutual edification, and in relieving one another according to our several abilities and necessities.

May the ascended Lord fill us with his Spirit and bless this work of ministering till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

II. The Doctrinal Standards

The text of the Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster in 1646, except for those slight revisions adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (the text is available in the *Trinity Hymnal* . . .).

The text of the Westminster Larger Catechism in its original form, with the amendments adopted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod in reference to answers 86-89 which seek to ensure neutrality in regard to the eschatological sequence (. . . Minutes of the 141st General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North Amer-

ica, General Synod, 1964, page 20).

The text of the Westminster Shorter Catechism in its original form.

III. Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship

A. The Form of Government of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod It is proposed that this Form . . . , the present Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and also the Third Revised Version of the Proposed Revision of the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church be referred to a Committee on Form of Government in the united Church for further study and recommendations.

B. The Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church [with provision for similar further study in the united Church].

C. The Directory for Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church [again with provision for further study in the united Church].

The preceding *Proposed Basis of Union* was adopted by the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church,

(Continued from Page 88)

court are to be given the consideration due to a court of the church of Jesus Christ. Members are free, however, not only to seek to change such decisions but to act in open disregard of them if they are not in agreement with the Word of God. The Christian Reformed practice would put the "burden of proof" on the individual to show that a synodical decision was in "conflict with the Word of God"; the Orthodox Presbyterian practice would require the courts of the church to prove that a member's disregard of some Assembly decision was in fact in defiance of the Word of God.

This hardly resolves what is an important difference, but only indicates the difference that exists. More recently, however, the joint talks have run up against the concern of the Orthodox Presbyterians over what they feel are "trends toward liberalism" within the Christian Reformed Church. Though many instances supposedly evidencing such trends have been cleared up, the concern still exists. As could be expected, such a concern hardly works to enhance the prospects toward a merger.

As a result, both committees agreed to report to their respective churches the present situation in their conversations. They recommended that both churches "continue to hold to the ultimate hope of organic union on a scriptural basis." But recognizing the difficulties, they also recommended postponing, "for the present, discussions specifically oriented to organic union." These recommendations, together with a third calling for various joint activities and use of each other's literature, were approved by the Assembly.

Statement on Abortion

The following statement was adopted by the 39th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Though adopted by a large majority, the statement was strongly

Evangelical Synod, during their annual sessions for 1972. The O. P. General Assembly acted to adopt it "with the further provision that the Committee [on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations] be instructed to seek to improve this statement in joint meeting with the [Fraternal Relations] Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, for inclusion in a Plan of Union."

Both the Assembly and the Synod instructed their respective committees to "prepare a Plan of Union to be submitted to the 1973 Synod and General Assembly."

Comment: The O. P. General Assembly did not specify what improvement it desired in the *Proposed Basis of Union*. The discussion preceding adoption of this instruction to its committee indicated that some commissioners wanted additional material, particularly in the area of Christian liberty, the need to avoid sectarianism and schism, and an emphasis on the sovereign grace of God in man's salvation, as well as other possible concerns.

It should also be recognized that drawing up a formal *Plan of Union*, with all the necessary procedures for merging presbyteries and church agencies, is a very large assignment to complete in only one year's time. But see the news item elsewhere in this issue concerning the first meeting of the Joint Committee following the conclusion of the Synod and General Assembly.

—J. J. M.

opposed by some commissioners either because they felt it went too far beyond clear Scripture teaching or because they felt it did not go far enough, or because it was felt that such statements are unwise apart from a specific judicial case. The statement, nearly identical to one submitted to the Assembly by the Presbytery of New Jersey, is intentionally brief and cites specific Scripture passages for its conclusions.

Believing that unborn children are living creatures in the image of God, given by God as a blessing to their parents, we therefore affirm that voluntary abortion, except possibly to save the physical life of the mother, is in violation of the Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13). We state the following reasons:

1. The Bible treats human personhood as beginning at conception (Psalm 139:13-16; 51:5; Jeremiah 1:4, 5; Luke 1:41-44; 1:29-38; Exodus 21:22-25).

2. The Bible considers the human person to be a complete person (Genesis 2:7; Numbers 23:10; Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). This unit is severed only by death and then only temporarily until the natural, intended union is restored at the resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

3. The Bible forbids murder because man is created in the image of God (Genesis 9:5, 6). The Bible further says that succeeding generations of men are conceived in the image of God (Genesis 5:1-3).

We call upon society and the church to show compassion toward unwed mothers and mothers of unwanted children. To this end, not only sympathetic counsel, but also concrete help should be extended (1 John 3:16-18; James 2:14-17).

But we also call upon our society to return to the law of God, recognizing the Word of God that "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).



When you write your Will WATCH OUT!

The very act of writing your last will and testament will save your survivors from many worries.

But be careful not to inflict upon them another set of worries and problems . . . the kind caused by poorly-written wills.

Do you know what to watch out for in naming beneficiaries? In selecting an executor? In taking advantage of tax laws? In anticipating probate expenses? In considering what and how to give to the work of the Lord?

There are literally dozens of pitfalls you should discuss with your attorney.

Send for our free folder. You'll find it helpful whether or not you wish to remember Westminster in your will. And we'll be glad to send it with no obligation whatever.

WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MAIL COUPON FOR INFORMATION

Department of Development
Westminster Theological Seminary
Chestnut Hill
Philadelphia, Pa. 19118

Please send me your free booklet on
Westminster and your will.

Name.....

Date of birth.....

Address.....

City.....

State..... Zip.....

Should OPs and RPs unite?—a personal view

In 1966, the Thirty-third General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting in Oostburg, Wisconsin, instructed its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to "work toward the ultimate goal of organic union [with] the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, on a scriptural basis." Similar action was taken by Reformed Presbyterians at their Synod.

The undersigned voted against that proposal then, feeling that there was insufficient unity in the faith and practice of the two churches to warrant the effort toward organic union. And since any expression of opinion about such a subject will be colored by personal biases, it seems better to speak openly and personally so the biases may be seen by the reader.

Six years of growing together

The arguments in favor of working toward this union, as presented in 1966, seemed to me to be too much and too fast. And disappointments in attempts at jointly run Bible conferences and other activities in the following year or two only tended to confirm the negative judgment. Problems that were obvious to me seemed to be glossed over by those who favored a union.

Yet the basic argument for seeking such a union, the argument that our Lord requires us to seek visible unity with those of like faith and practice, has been increasingly borne in upon the consciences of many. And the differences that many of us saw have become increasingly ironed out as the underlying unity in the truth has been seen.

During the intervening years, a joint committee from the two churches has been meeting and working toward that "ultimate goal of organic union." And

Orthodox Presbyterians have been tending to outgrow the opinion that they alone were truly Orthodox, Reformed, and Presbyterian. Reformed Presbyterians have been coming to see more need for doctrinal precision in this day of apostasy. Both groups have been gaining an appreciation for the other's strengths and commitment to the truths of the Scripture.

A crucial decision in 1972

Finally this year the Thirty-ninth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting again in Oostburg, received a recommendation from its Committee on Ecumenicity urging adoption of a "Proposed Basis of Union" and asking that the committee be instructed to work out with the Reformed Presbyterian committee an actual "Plan of Union." The plan, which would include the details of actual merger, is to be presented in 1973—if that is possible.

The recommendation passed, by a very large majority, both in the O. P. Assembly and the R. P. Synod. The undersigned voted in favor this time. Why? and why did so large a number agree? For some it was probably done with enthusiasm and full conviction that merger was right. For others it may have been reluctant, with concern for the problems to be solved and perhaps with a little nostalgia at the thought of becoming only a medium-sized frog in a larger pond. For others it was done because they felt it was the Lord's will in spite of the difficulties and adjustments required.

This year's vote, however, by no means assures that "ultimate goal of organic union" yet. The O. P. Assembly, though it adopted the "Proposed Basis," also called for "improving" it. And there is the "Plan of Union" itself to be worked out including some rather sticky problems. Even if the Plan is presented next year, it must pass both the O. P. Assembly and R. P. Synod and then be voted on by the presbyteries. The earliest possible date for the merger itself would be in 1974.

Can two live as one?

Where are we then? We have two Presbyterian churches both of which wholeheartedly receive the Scriptures as the infallible, inerrant, and authori-

The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR

JOHN J. MITCHELL

All correspondence should be addressed to The Presbyterian Guardian, 7401 Old York Road, Phila., Pa. 19126

tative Word of God. We have two churches that agree on what the Scriptures teach, both of them subscribing to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. We have two churches that consistently proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior of sinners and the Lord who commissioned his church to teach that truth to all the world.

But aren't there differences? Of course there are. Yet I believe it is fair to say there are no differences *between* the two churches that are not also to be found *within* each of them. No doubt there will be some tense moments in any united church, as old frictions are rubbed afresh and new problems arise. But certainly both churches have had many such experiences in the past, with strong differences of opinion, strenuous debates and protests.

The basic question is simply whether the Spirit of truth will so overrule our contentious natures that together we will grow to a fuller maturity after the image of Christ. The Reformed Presbyterian brethren may need to continue to grow in appreciation of the liberty we have in Christ free from the commandments of men, even as the Orthodox Presbyterian brethren need to grow

in patterns of holy living that bring honor to the name of our Lord. It will not be easy, and there may be some whose consciences will not allow them to remain in such a united church.

Do I think the OPs and RPs should unite? Yes, though it is a cautious and perhaps reluctant affirmative. I believe also, that both churches are ready for it and, barring the possible snags that may yet arise, I believe it will come to pass. Perhaps we shall see yet again a Presbyterian church in our land with the strength to challenge the apostate churches and the size to provide a fellowship for all those of like precious faith throughout the land. I pray earnestly that the Spirit of Christ will lead us in the ways of his own truth as we seek "organic union on a scriptural basis."

— J. J. M.

Having aired my own view, I would like to see the views of others on this subject. In the months to come, the *Guardian* will welcome such expressions of opinion. We plan also to run articles surveying the work and ministry of both the Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterian churches.

O. P./R. P. Joint Committee Meets

Philadelphia — The Fraternal Relations Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met together here on Monday, May 22. The meeting followed the conclusion of both the R. P. Synod and the O. P. General Assembly, in both of which the joint committee was instructed to work out a formal *Plan of Union* to present in 1973.

Dr. Robert G. Rayburn of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis was elected president of the joint committee, with the Rev. LeRoy B. Oliver, General Secretary of the O. P. Committee on Home Missions, chosen as secretary.

Three subcommittees were set up to work on various aspects of the *Plan of Union*. The Subcommittee on Standards is to make recommendations concerning the name of any united church and its standards of doctrine, government, discipline and worship. The Subcommittee on the Preamble (which, as

part of a *Proposed Basis of Union*, was adopted by both the Synod and the General Assembly, though the latter body asked that improvements be made in it) is to continue work on this preliminary statement for inclusion in the Plan. The Subcommittee on the Adopting Act is to work out the details of effectuating a merger at presbytery levels and in regard to various church agencies.

Membership on the joint committee, as named by the respective Assembly and Synod, is: *Orthodox Presbyterian*: Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, the Rev. John P. Galbraith, Dr. George W. Knight III, the Rev. LeRoy B. Oliver, the Rev. Jack J. Peterson, Dr. Paul Woolley; *Reformed Presbyterian*: the Rev. Gustav L. Blomquist, Dr. Richard W. Gray, Dr. R. Laird Harris, the Rev. Kenneth A. Horner Jr., the Rev. Donald J. MacNair, Dr. Robert G. Rayburn, the Rev. Lynden H. Stewart.

A further meeting of the joint committee is scheduled for November to hear the reports of the subcommittees.

PENSACOLA THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

August 13-20, 1972

A serious approach to theological study for ministers, students and interested laymen during eight days under competent scholars against the refreshing background of Florida beach life and at a cost you can afford.

The sixteenth annual Pensacola Theological Institute of McIlwain Memorial Presbyterian Church will have the following faculty:

● **Robert Strong** of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Ala., will preach at each evening service and Sunday mornings at 11:00. The Institute Choir will be directed by **Henry Thomas Ford** of Belhaven College.

● **James I. Packer** of Bristol, England, author of "Fundamentalism and the Word of God" and "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God" will lecture on Highways and Byways in Theology Today.

● **Albert N. Martin** of Trinity Baptist Church, Essex Fells, N. J., will expound The Parable of the Sower.

● **George C. Fuller** of Reformed Theological Seminary will speak on the controversial subject: The Mission of the Church; and,

● **Jack B. Scott** of Reformed Theological Seminary will discuss Problems in Old Testament Study.

Lectures and Question-and-Answer Periods are in morning sessions. A Junior Institute is provided for the children. Accommodations are available in homes, beach cottages, and hotels or motels. The Institute is strongly committed to the inerrancy of Scripture and to the system of doctrine in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

For information write:

Pensacola Theological Institute
McIlwain Presbyterian Church
1214 East Blount Street
Pensacola, Florida 32503

The Elders of the Church

— laboring in their calling

LAWRENCE R. EYRES

I like the word "session" (which means "a sitting together"). In Presbyterian churches this is the common name for the body of elders of a local congregation. Among their duties the highest is that of sitting together as a court of the Lord Jesus Christ, ruling for him over the affairs of his flock.

The work of the undershepherds

The trouble is that many men who sit on sessions seem to think that sitting is all that elders have to do. They forget that elders, as Christ's undershepherds, must also *stand* to minister to the saints; they must *walk* (and sometimes *run*) to seek Christ's wandering sheep; they must *kneel* daily to lift up the flock before the throne of grace in prayer!

In this article I want to sketch something of the breadth of this holy office. The qualifications for eldership (to be discussed in detail in a later article) can be summed up as basically three: (1) An elder must be a stable, mature Christian; (2) he must possess special gifts for ruling; and (3) he must be "apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

While I shall use for convenience the terminology of "ruling and teaching elder," I believe this distinction is unfortunate. It is readily admitted that "all elders rule"; but the second part of that old saying — "and some elders teach" — is not accurate. Paul tells Timothy that a bishop (elder) must be "apt to teach."* And this applies to all elders without distinction.

That some elders today cannot teach is evidence that these men hold an office for which they are not fully qualified. The real distinction within the office of elder would be stated this way: All elders should "rule well"; but some of these are called to "labor in the word and doctrine." Some, in other words, give themselves wholly to laboring in the ministry of the Word of God. (See 1 Timothy 5:17, 18.)

The scope of eldership

The elders as a body (or session) are responsible for guarding the gates of the visible church. They exercise the keys of the kingdom of heaven for binding and loosing (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). It is their duty, ministering in Jesus' name, to pronounce as repentant and justified sinners all who come before them giving credible evidence of being born again to faith in Christ. And to these the elders of the church must minister the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and

* Several scholars have argued that "apt to teach" may be a misleading translation of the Greek term (*didaktikos*). It may mean "able to be taught" rather than "able to teach." But the need for the ruling elder to be able to teach does not depend on this phrase. Since all rule in the church is "ministerial and declarative," and not despotic and coercive, every church ruler must be ready to minister the truth, to declare it — to *teach* it to the flock.

the sacrament of baptism to them and their children.

In other words, the session is to receive repentant and believing sinners into Christ's church and is to feed them there. But since these believers may stumble and fall into sin, the session must also stand ready to deal with this situation. They may even be forced to acknowledge that their first judgment was in error and finally to put the disobedient and obdurate outside the fold of the Good Shepherd.

It is here that many elders fail. Though they may be men of integrity, yet many times they are either unable or unwilling to render such judgment *for Christ*. Too often, in admitting and disciplining members under their care, they are moved to judge according to their feelings of like or dislike toward the individuals concerned, and thus become judges of evil thoughts (James 2:4).

This failure is in two areas: (1) These elders fail to realize that their decisions are *in Christ's name and in his stead*. It is his church, not theirs. It is to him they must answer for their use of the keys. True, they constitute a court; but they must always realize that there is a higher Court to which all cases will be appealed in the end! What then will be their reward when called to give an account of their stewardship to the Head of the church?

(2) These elders may also fail to rule well due to incompetence in the knowledge, use and application of Holy Scripture to the persons and cases under consideration. A good test of whether or not a particular session rules well can be found in whether or not their actions in this area are done with a near unanimity. Surely there is room for divergence of opinion among brethren in such decisions. But when basic questions of doctrine or life are before a session, these elders ought to be able to speak with one voice simply because the Word of God speaks with one voice on the great matters of faith and life!

Elders as individual rulers

The exercise of rule by the session rests upon and grows out of the activity of each individual elder as he goes in and out among the people. The activity of a session as it sits to rule is a high and holy calling. But that activity should never be an "ivory tower" sort of thing.

When the elders are "up there" in session, their minds and hearts must be fully aware of all that goes on "down there" where the church lives in the world. These men must have the pulse of the people if they are to rule well in session. But how do elders get that way? Through the labors of teaching, of teaching the Word, exhorting the people, admonishing "publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

Yes, *all* elders have a public ministry of the Word. This is not to suppose that they have equal shares in that ministry. Some are not as gifted as others in public exhortation, be it

Sunday school teaching, conducting Bible classes or prayer meetings, or "lay" preaching. But every elder ought to have some ability to communicate the Word of God on a one-to-one basis at the very least.

The man who is totally lacking in this ability ought not to be an elder (Titus 1:9). In fact, I would stress that every session of any size ought to have at least one ruling elder with talents for preaching so that he can fill the pulpit from time to time. Certainly those with evident gifts in this area should be encouraged to develop those gifts fully.

The elders and the pastor

We still haven't exhausted the duties of the ruling elders in this area of the public ministry of the Word. For the elders of the church "should have particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth" (as stated in the warrant for the office of elder in the *Directory for Worship* of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Ch. VI, B, 2).

In other words, the ruling elders should encourage, advise, and give constructive criticism to the pastor in his role as chief teaching elder for the congregation. The pulpit can be a lonely place. The pastor who stands there from week to week without such support from his fellow elders is called to bear a burden too heavy for one pair of shoulders!

There is need at this point to sound a serious warning. It sometimes happens that members of the congregation will come to one or more of the elders, expressing feelings of resentment or disapproval of the pastor's preaching or of his ministry in general. This is not wrong in itself. Some pastors appear rather unapproachable to those who sit in the pews. Still, everything depends on how the elders handle such expressions of concern.

If an elder readily agrees with the complaints, the word will get around and he will soon become the rally-point for dissension and division. He must shun this role! If the criticisms are trivial, he should deal with them from the position of solidarity with the pastor. If he cannot resolve the problems, it becomes his duty to bring the dissidents and the pastor together in a prayerful effort to heal what would otherwise become a breach in the peace of the church. In fact, procedures to deal with such possibilities ought to be worked out in the session and agreed upon *before* troubles of this sort surface! In short, elders are to be healers, not inflictors, of wounds in the body of Christ.

The elders and the people

To put the matter differently, the ruling elders need to be alert for seeds of dissension within the church family as a whole, that they might be healers of incipient discord at all times. When any elder is unable to heal a developing problem singly, he must immediately bring the problem to the attention of the session before the whole church is hopelessly torn asunder.

We might visualize this matter by picturing two concentric circles, a small one within a larger. The smaller circle is the session, existing within the larger circumference of the whole congregation. Within the smaller circle there should be no division or dissension, if the elders are truly and preeminently men of God and able to apply the Scripture to every area of life. But within the larger circle there are bound to be problems from time to time.

Elders who have their eyes and ears open (and at the

same time are walking with God) can deal personally with most of these, always attempting to guide the brethren into a scriptural resolution of the problems. But when personal efforts fail, the problem must come before the whole session, into the smaller circle, where it can receive the attention of the whole body of rulers. If dealt with here promptly and scripturally, there is no problem in any church that cannot be resolved to the glory of God and the edifying of God's people, even in those cases where excision of an obdurate member becomes necessary.

Ruling is teaching

It is quite unrealistic to separate the teaching from the ruling function in the work of the elder. All elders rule by teaching — and teach by ruling — even though at times they may be concentrating chiefly on one aspect. Even in the extreme of judicial discipline there is a teaching ministry, since nothing should be done except as the need for it arises out of the Word of God.

For this reason elders must stay close to those over whom they rule, even as they must stay close to the Word of him for whom they do rule. The elders need to be personally and intimately acquainted with the lives of the members of the flock. The teaching elder should remind the congregation that elders are representatives of the Lord and are to be heard, submitted to, and obeyed in the Lord (cf. Hebrews 13:17, 17).

An excellent system for this purpose (and one with a long history among Presbyterians) is to assign a proportionate share of the church's families to each ruling elder, to whom and for whom he is responsible to minister. It will be his duty to visit in their homes, to exhort them personally on all sorts of questions when he discerns their need for it. They in turn will be taught to expect this sort of ministry, even to seek it out when they feel a need for it.

A family's special overseer must be often in that home to rejoice with members of the family in times of joy, to weep with them in times of sorrow. It will soon be obvious to every member of the church that his elder-overseer has him personally on his heart, bearing him up before the throne of grace day in and day out. If every ruling elder were to become effective in such a ministry it could never be said of any — as I have heard it said of some — "I could never feel free to bring my problems to him!"

Let the life of every man of God be transparently the life of one who cares! And caring costs. But when the Chief Shepherd calls on his undershepherds to give an account of their ministry, every man worthy of his calling to rule will reply, "I cared for thy flock, for some with joy and for others with grief." Let us all, elders and people, take stock of this fact and learn how we all ought to behave ourselves in the house of God.

"If a man desire the office of a bishop," said Paul to Timothy, "he desireth a good work." Good work, in any field, is seldom easy. Good work will often call for weary hours of plodding, for long night vigils, for heartaches and tears. God give us men who will work and strive and pray and weep for the flock of God that he purchased with the blood of his Son!

The Rev. Mr. Eyres is a missionary-pastor in Dayton, Ohio. Copies of the Guardian in which the previous articles of this series appeared are available at cost (40¢ per copy) to any reader who may have missed some of them.

The Presbyterian Guardian

7401 Old York Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19126

Mr. Kenneth Austin
P.O. Box 95
Oakland City, Ind. 47660
Feb.

Second Class Postage Paid
At Philadelphia, Pa.

43rd COMMENCEMENT FOR WESTMINSTER SEMINARY

Thirty-three graduates received bachelor of divinity degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary in commencement exercises on May 31. Seven others received master of theology degrees. The 43rd annual exercises were held in the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as thunder clouds blocked the traditional garden setting.

The Rev. Dr. Paul Woolley, professor of church history, gave the commencement address: "Yesterday, Today, and For Ever". In it he reviewed the Seminary's origin, its purpose then and over the years, as well as its challenge in the future.

This commencement marked the end of regular faculty service for both Professor Woolley and Dr. Cornelius Van Til, professor of apologetics at the Seminary. Both men are retiring this year, though both expect to lecture next fall on a limited schedule.

The departure of Professors Van Til and Woolley concludes the service of the original faculty of the Seminary. Since 1929 when the Seminary opened in Philadelphia, over 1200 men have been trained for the Lord's service. Graduates of Westminster are located all over the world, many of them teaching

others for the gospel ministry.

The church of Jesus Christ owes praise and thanks to her Lord for the courage of men like Paul Woolley and Cornelius Van Til, and for their faithful service. May the Lord give courage, strength and wisdom to Westminster's "second generation" faculty that the whole counsel of God might continue to be the subject taught there, to the glory of God's grace.

The Rev. Harvie M. Conn has been appointed Assistant Professor of Missions and Apologetics, and will begin his new duties in the fall. Mr. Conn has completed 12 years as a missionary to Korea, including teaching at the General Assembly seminary in Seoul.

Here and There in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

La Mirada, Cal.— Calvary Church recently completed payment on a loan it had received from Calvary Church of Cedar Grove, Wisc. It was a time of rejoicing and encouragement for the La Mirada church, not only because the debt was paid but because it was paid several months before due. Retirement of the debt clears the way for further plans here.

The original loan was secured by a mortgage on the Cedar Grove church manse. This act of love and

brotherhood should serve as an example to others.

Elder John Kortenhoeven presided at the worship service when the mortgage was presented to Trustee Ralph Bullock, one of the original trustees to sign the mortgage. Pictured from left to right are John Kortenhoeven, Ralph Bullock, Herman deRu, Preston Barr III, and Pastor Kent Hinkson. Following a prayer of thanksgiving, the congregation sang the Doxology in praise for God's goodness.



The Rev. Lawrence R. Eyres congratulates son-in-law following ordination.

Alliance, Ohio—Members of the Presbytery of Ohio met here on May 26 to ordain David W. King as a minister of the gospel. He is engaged in home mission work in the northeastern part of Ohio.

The ordination sermon was delivered by the Rev. LeRoy Oliver, general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. Since June 1, the Rev. and Mrs. King are living at 3127 S. Union Ave. N.E. Alliance OH 44601.



The Presbyterian Guardian