

The Presbyterian Guardian

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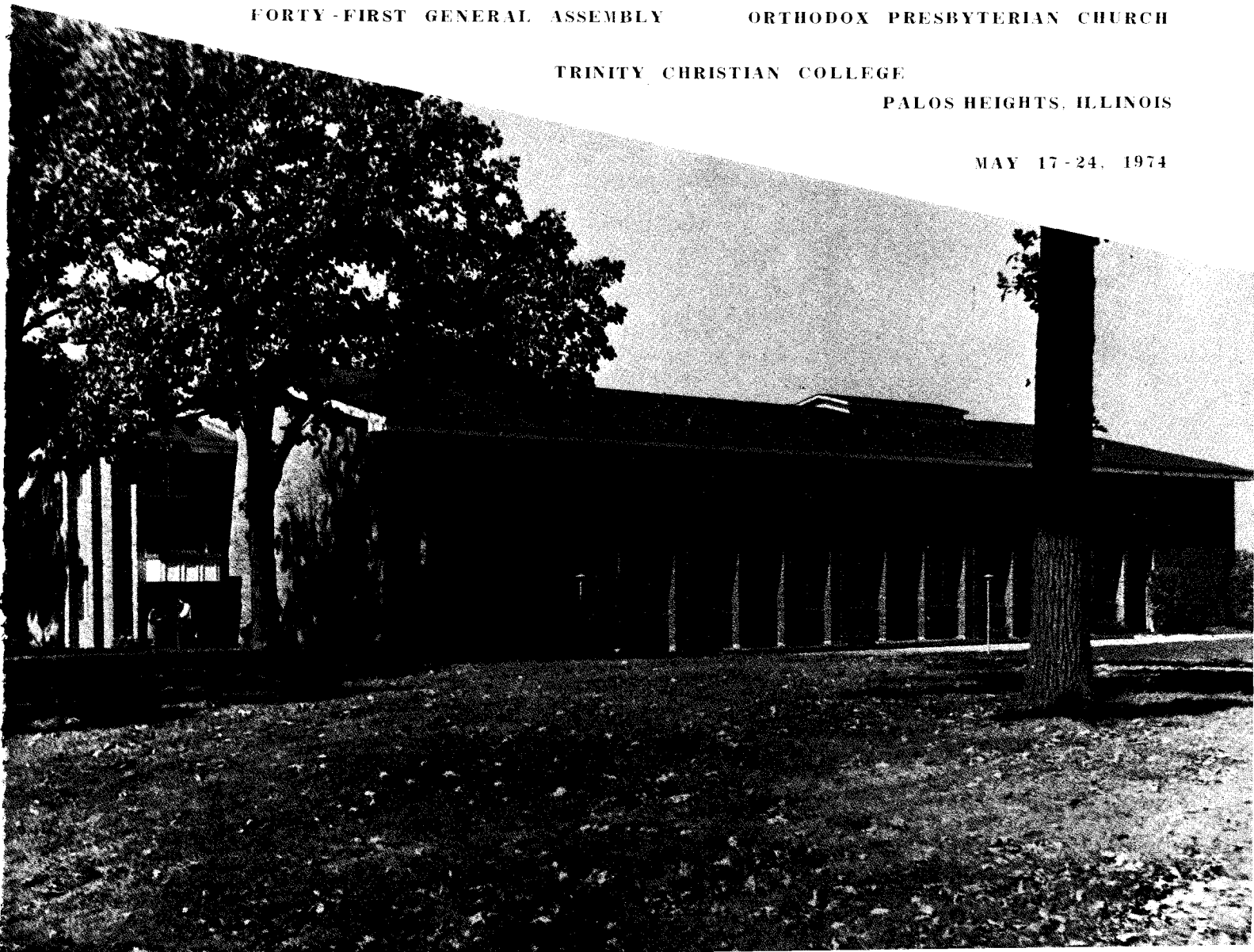
FORTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

TRINITY CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

PALOS HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS

MAY 17-24, 1974



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Open the Guardian to women?

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

Do you have any daughters? Do you have friends that have daughters? Have any of these girls gone to college? Do you believe in education for women? What have they, these daughters, done since they got out of college? Did they marry? Have children? Return to work after the baby was born? Do you believe in mothers working outside the home? Does the Scripture say anything about this? (Most ministers do not find time to preach on it, if it does!)

Do I sound like a "Women's Lib" exponent? Well, I am not! I am so conservative that I find it nearly impossible to exist in today's society. But I see a need in the Christian world of today that I would like to put before you—a need in which the *Presbyterian Guardian* could participate in offering a solution.

How much of the *Presbyterian Guardian* would you consider turning over to the women in the church?

Is that such a strange question, considering that over half of every adult Christian church is made up of women? Is it such a strange question, considering that there are no Christian magazines for women as such? Does it matter to no one that when a woman wants to read an article in a magazine, or a piece of fiction, that she has only the most liberal and biased literature to turn to?

Why do the men of the church not care what their wives and the mothers of their children feed their hearts and minds upon? Has it never occurred to any of the men in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that women deserve better? that there are women in almost all of our churches capable of writing articles and stories to the glory of God, to the furthering of the gospel, to the raising up of missionaries?

Too many Christian wives and mothers have been "goal oriented" by worldly publications in a direction that is too much of this world and too little of Christ. Too often we have been directed toward choices that build pride in worldly accomplishments, and too

seldom have we considered modesty and humility as either Christian or desirable. Reading in Titus 2 one would find a long list of topics to be expounded, discussed, and digested as woman to woman, and older woman to younger; for example: Loving Your Husband; Being Sensible; Purity; Workers at Home; and many others.

Mr. Mitchell, let me say that this need is so real that unless such periodicals as the *Guardian* open their pages to the women in the church, it is entirely possible they will be starting their own magazine. Please do not say that the women can have space for an article any time they so desire! That does not offer the right incentive! Give them a double page—challenge them to write.

The women of our country are in much the same position as Abijah found himself in as described in 2 Chronicles 13:13-16—we are besieged behind and before by the forces of Satan. This could be the sounding of the trumpets, the raising of the "battle cry." It is time for the men of the church to realize that they do have a responsibility to the women in the church. It is time for husbands and fathers to start listening to what is being said at their own diningroom tables, for while they fight Satan at the front door, he is coming in through the kitchen.

Please sir, is it not time that at least part of the *Guardian* be made available to those who rock the cradle, teach the Sunday school class, and spoil the children?

Mrs. Dorothy F. Stukey
Polson, Montana

Dear Mrs. Stukey:

Yes, you're quite right, it is time that part of the *Guardian* be made available to the women in the church. A double page? You're more than welcome to that much. Challenge them to write? Well, here is the challenge: Fill up those two pages each month!

John J. Mitchell

P. S.: See p. 83; also p. 94! J. J. M.

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from one woman to another

Attending a General Assembly

Dear Dorothy:

Thought you might be interested in hearing a bit about the General Assembly which I attended as an observer, while my husband served as a commissioner.

"Breathe thou upon us, Lord,
Thy Spirit's living flame,
That so with one accord
Our lips may tell thy Name."

With the singing of these words, the Forty-first General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church began its opening worship on May 18, 1974. If you have ever heard the singing at General Assembly, you know what a thrill it is just to stand and listen to them praising God. Sometimes I do sing along, but it's great to listen, too.

The assembly is usually held in one of our larger churches with commissioners billeted in members' homes. But this year it met at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. There were about 150 in attendance, including ministers, elders, fraternal delegates, wives, guests, etc.

It's fun as well as educational to attend and observe. There's opportunity to meet people from all parts of the country and to hear news of many of our churches and chapels. It's good to meet those for whom you prayed or have read about in the *Guardian*. Sure, your back aches and your muscles are stiff after a week of those chairs, and there are boring moments, but many exciting ones, too.

I always take knitting, a book, some writing material and most of the other women there are doing one or another of those things, also. I do recommend your attending, Dorothy, if the Lord gives you that opportunity.

To observe a General Assembly puts all we do in our local congregations into perspective, as you see the work of the whole church. Sometimes there is the thrill of witnessing a decision important for all of our churches and our future together serving the Lord where he placed us. Then too, my husband and I picked up some useful ideas for starting chapels and churches just from asking other commissioners about their experiences and how they proceeded in their particular city or town.

A pleasant scene

The facilities at Trinity, a four-year liberal arts college supported by Reformed and Christian Reformed churches, are truly fabulous. We had a suite of two rooms (one vacant when our intended suitemates used their camper instead), with walk-in closet and bathroom, on the second floor of a dormitory only a short walk from the cafeteria and meeting room.

Walking was about the only exercise for the women. The men, I must say, had a better program, with opportunities for exercise, volleyball, basketball, ping pong, etc. At least one commissioner did his usual jogging routine each morning along the walkways.

The campus is lovely with many trees and flowering

bushes. The view from our window included a small brook wandering through a meadow behind "our" dorm, giving a certain pastoral air—no pun intended. It did rain quite a bit; but God made the rain, and I liked it. The brook was full or flooding by turns.

A woodpecker woke me one morning and as I listened to it, I praised God for our church and the individuals in it. Early morning is such a pleasant time for prayer and praise! It was a joy, first to hear the news of each one's ministry as we met again, and then later to reflect on it and hold that one up in prayer before the Lord at various moments throughout the week.

The food in the school's cafeteria was delicious and inexpensive, though my husband didn't enjoy standing in line waiting for it. I loved not cooking for a whole week, as you can imagine, plus having a chance to catch up on the news of one friend and another over a meal or cup of coffee. It's amazing, but some of those men look *exactly* as they did twenty years ago!

Over the weekend, commissioners went off in every direction to visit local churches and meet new friends who share our belief in Jesus our Lord. A few went as far as Oostburg to the north and even Dayton to the east.

On our return on Monday we found that Pioneer Girls had an excellent exhibit in the dining hall where we could learn something of their work with girls' clubs including their training program for leadership by adults in the churches. Judy Bryson, marketing coordinator for Pioneer Girls, was introduced to the Assembly. Many commissioners carried brochures back home with them.

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship also had a display. Brett Lamberty, IV Area Director for Illinois and Wisconsin, was also introduced to the Assembly.

A tea with ideas

On Tuesday afternoon about thirty-five women attended a tea hosted by Mrs. Dorothy Reitsma, representing the local presbyterial. Mrs. Doris Fikkert of Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, shared some of her ideas for arts, crafts, and the program she has been using in working with young people and ladies' societies. It was a do-it-yourself effort as she passed out some of the materials she uses so those present could try their hand at one or two craft ideas.

One of her ideas for making Scripture memorization, catechism training, and Bible study relevant to young people today included an involved program called "BibliOlympics" (credit for which, Doris insists, must be shared with her sister Daisy). This was done the year the Winter Olympics were held in Munich and the program followed many of the Olympic ideas. The teams represented six cities addressed by New Testament epistles.

The church basement became the Jerusalem Stadium—and young people came to the first meeting not knowing

(Continued on page 96.)



Reviewing a General Assembly

THE EDITOR

How do you assess the results of a general assembly? In Acts 15 it says there was "no small dissension and disputation" beforehand, and "much disputing" while that first assembly of apostles and elders was being held. But when it was all over and agreement had been reached, they could write of their "being assembled with one accord."

What a strange phenomenon! Yet in many ways it describes the Forty-first General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Despite strong differences of opinion expressed in advance and vigorous debate during assembly sessions, most decisions were finally taken in a remarkable degree of unity.

Commissioners gathered in the attractive dining hall of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, on the evening of Friday, May 17. The Rev. Charles H. Ellis of Silver Spring, Maryland, and Moderator of the Fortieth Assembly, opened the sessions of the Assembly with a sermon and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It seemed a little odd to meet somewhere other than one of our churches, but the fellowship and singing were up to past standards.

Most commissioners were housed in the college dormitories, eating their meals in the dining hall, while the Assembly itself met in a classroom building. Though the meeting place was cramped, the facilities otherwise were unusually helpful to the Assembly's business. Temporary committees met frequently, and having commissioners within walking distance permitted many groups to continue their business after the evening recess. It was agreed that the convenience of such facilities far outweighed the modest cost for food and lodging.

This was the second assembly chosen on a proportional representation. There were eighty-four ministers and forty-four ruling elders initially enrolled, slightly less than last year. Such a limited assembly permits more open debate and tends to involve more commissioners in the debate.

On Saturday morning the Assembly proceeded to business.

After reelecting ruler elder Richard A. Barker as Stated Clerk, with the Rev. Stephen L. Phillips serving as his assistant, the Assembly moved to choose a Moderator. The Rev. Lawrence N. Vail, pastor of Grace Church in Vienna, Virginia, was elected. These three men performed outstanding service to the Assembly in guiding it through a heavy docket of business.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

For the second year the Assembly channeled all its business through Advisory Committees. These groups reviewed every report and communication presented to the Assembly. Each commissioner either served on a committee or was there to represent and answer questions about one of the reports.

This year the Advisory Committees really accomplished their purpose. What the system does is assure that every report or other paper before the Assembly is carefully reviewed by a representative group of commissioners. So often it has been virtually impossible for commissioners to read all the materials, much less to understand them well. Under this new arrangement at least someone has thoroughly examined everything.

These Advisory Committees naturally provide a degree of investigation into the work of the standing (permanent) committees. They have time to ask questions, make suggestions, and really look into what is being done in home and foreign missions and Christian education, as well as in the other agencies of the church. The result is a more knowledgeable appreciation of the work actually being done.

Because the Advisory Committees did their preliminary work well the Assembly was free to proceed in its business with little delay. In all but one or two instances the recommendations of the advisory groups were adopted by the Assembly, frequently by nearly unanimous votes.

Only once or twice did things get bogged down in parlia-

mentary snarls and strenuous debate. There were occasional appeals for help by confused commissioners, including the one who begged for someone to "clear the air in my head" so he would know how to vote.

Some of the major concerns of the Assembly are summarized in what follows.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Committee on Christian Education was the first major committee to present its report. In recent years the Assembly has repeatedly called for this agency to continue its effort in developing a full curriculum of Sunday school material. This effort is largely done for grades 1 through 12, but the financial burden has been heavy for so small a church as the OPC.

Nor is the burden over. It's not enough to write a good manual and then reprint it every three years. There needs to be a continuing updating and upgrading of the material or it soon becomes stale. This requires continuing investment in writers, artists, and publication costs.

Besides this continuing financial effort, the committee finds itself short of staff personnel. People able to write effectively and from a soundly biblical viewpoint have been hard to find. The inflationary pressure on everyone adds to the difficulty in securing needed staff people.

A very enheartening interest in the committee's Great Commission Publications by the newly organized National Presbyterian Church did promise some relief in the financial burden. It had been hoped that the NPC might enter into a cooperative venture in Sunday school publication. Though still firmly recommending Great Commission materials to their churches, the NPC committee found itself unable to enter the partnership just yet. One factor influencing this decision is the very newness of their church and the uncertainty about the degree of support to be expected from their congregations.

If Great Commission materials were used only by Orthodox Presbyterians, the continuing heavy costs could hardly be justified. But these publications serve some 436 churches besides the 123 OP congregations using them. A total of over 19,000 young people are being ministered the gospel through these biblically based instructional helps.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has also performed a ministry to many others through *Trinity Hymnal*. Over 500 churches use the hymnal with 98,000 copies in print. New printings are necessary to meet continuing demand.

Despite serious financial pressures on all sides, the Assembly seemed clear in its desire to see the work of this

The Rev. Charles H. Ellis turns over the gavel to newly elected moderator, the Rev. Laurence N. Vail. Clerks Stephen L. Phillips and Richard A. Barker are seated in the foreground.



The Forty-first General Assembly in session on a warm and humid day.

committee maintained. Not least in the considerations behind this sentiment is the very remarkable evangelistic outreach achieved by these printed bearers of the gospel of God's grace.

HOME MISSIONS

The report of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension showed some encouragements in progress being made and concern for the many opportunities for which funds are not available.

Two churches assumed full support during 1973 freeing funds to help two other small beginnings. Concern was expressed over the small rate of growth in home mission works, and a search for reasons behind this disappointing progress is being sought. The denomination as a whole also shows a very small growth rate. Surely there is a concern here that should receive the prayerful attention of every session and presbytery. Statistics are not the proof of a good or bad church; but they may very well point to weaknesses that could be corrected to the Lord's greater glory.

The committee proposes to add one more missionary-at-large and hopes eventually to have at least one in every presbytery. Such a person could minister to and encourage several widely scattered groups until they develop enough to have their own home missionary-pastor.

The committee has also provided some funds for an internship program. In this program support is provided for a young man, usually just out of seminary, to profit by several months' service under an experienced pastor. The fruits of this program so far seem well worth the cost. But the desire of some commissioners to see it required of all candidates for the pastoral ministry is probably too much in view of the costs involved.

In general, this Assembly seemed to feel that the church's work of home missions must be maintained and enlarged if possible. Increased involvement by local congregations and presbyteries is encouraging. Some concern to know just how much support is given to home missions was evident, and better information on the costs of the various home missions programs is being sought.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

As is often the case, the report of the Committee on Foreign Missions generated an intense interest. Somehow sending a missionary to far-off Taiwan seems more exciting



The Rev. John P. Galbraith speaking on opportunities in foreign missions today.

than planting one in the violence-shrouded innercity areas of America or of providing a writer-evangelist to communicate the gospel to today's young minds. So again this year the vision for foreign missions captured the attention of every commissioner at the Assembly.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has always had more open doors abroad than its limited resources enabled it to enter. Even the fields it serves now urgently need both replacements and additions. But a most significant opening has developed in Lebanon where an already existing group of believers earnestly desire a sound Reformed ministry. Strategically located in the heart of the Arab world, Lebanon is one of the few Arab countries open to missionaries. A solid foothold there could be the means to a wide dissemination of the gospel.

But the needs elsewhere are equally urgent. Every existing field needs at least one replacement and most of them need additional help now. Particularly acute is the need in Ethiopia where only one ordained evangelist is serving, with the hospital staff as invaluable, but limited, assistants. New missionaries should be sent now to fill gaps in both Taiwan and Korea.

Already the Rev. and Mrs. Lendall H. Smith are preparing to go to Taiwan with the full support of the Reformed Church, U.S. (Eureka Classis). Mr. John S. Mason is engaging in linguistics study hoping to get visa clearance for work in Ethiopia. Other prospective candidates are waiting in the wings to see whether the needed financial support is forthcoming.

In the light of these opportunities and needs, the committee had requested a significant increase in its budget for 1975. That decision is reported under the next section below.

STEWARDSHIP

It must seem to many that general assemblies spend a great deal of time haggling over budget matters. Well, they do—and they should. This area of an assembly's work is crucially important, since it determines the priorities of the church's evangelistic outreach and it concerns the faithful handling of the gifts of the Lord's people to the work of spreading the gospel.

For several years the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has supported its major evangelistic efforts, home missions, foreign missions, and Christian education, through a Com-

binated Budget system. Churches and individuals may contribute to a single budget and thus share in the work of all three agencies.

But such a Combined Budget requires that someone decide how to combine the budget requests of three different committees. That is the task, not always too popular a one, of the Committee on Stewardship. This committee reviews the budget requests being made, struggles to arrive at a proper apportionment and then presents its conclusions for the Assembly's action. When the Assembly approves a Combined Budget, it constitutes a promise to the committees that the approved budget amounts will be supplied by the churches.

The budget requests for 1975 confronted the Committee on Stewardship with a total figure beyond reasonable expectation. In particular, the request of the Committee on Foreign Missions to expand its work seemed impossible to grant without cutting back the work of home missions and Christian education. After considerable discussion, the Assembly with very real reluctance adopted a Combined Budget that did not include the total requested for foreign missions. As approved, the 1975 Combined Budget contains the following amounts:

Christian Education	\$175,000
Foreign Missions	270,000
Home Missions	215,000

Combined Budget \$660,000

The \$270,000 for foreign missions is \$36,000 less than was requested. Even so, the total Combined Budget is 32% more than was given in 1973 and requires a 16% increase both in 1974 and again in 1975. Even as they adopted this total, the commissioners were aware that contributions so far in 1974 are *below* those posted to the same date in 1973. Commissioners who voted to adopt this 1975 Combined Budget have surely committed themselves to much prayer and effort to support the budgeted programs of gospel proclamation.

Despite the fact that it could not see its way clear to grant the requested total for foreign missions, the Assembly was acutely aware of the challenge presented. So it determined to request all the churches to inform the Committee on Stewardship "how much of the Combined Budget and the additional needs for Foreign Missions they will be willing to provide in 1975." The intent is to secure information early enough to permit the committees to plan their 1975 program at the beginning of year instead of having to wait

Careful attention to the business at hand.



until December to see how things worked out.

As approved, the 1975 budgets are basically a continuation of present evangelistic outreach with little enlargement except for inflation costs. Only after this minimum program has been secured will new foreign mission efforts be undertaken. It is indeed a tremendous challenge that the Lord has placed before Orthodox Presbyterians, and truly sacrificial giving by the Lord's people will be required to meet it.

Can Orthodox Presbyterians provide \$660,000 for the work of Christian education, home missions, and foreign missions, and then provide an additional \$36,000 for new foreign missions effort? They contributed \$500,000 to these causes in 1973. I believe the answer to this question is simple. We can, with the Lord's blessing and our faithful response to his grace. And now is the time to begin earnest prayer for the Lord's gracious hand to be upon us.

PROBLEMS OF RACE

A special study committee was erected by the 1971 General Assembly to seek "proper Christian action for the church of Jesus Christ in meeting the problems of race based upon plain and consistent Biblical principles." This committee's report was finally discussed this year after being postponed in last year's Assembly.

The report contains both a careful study of relevant Scripture passages touching on questions of race, and then proceeds to apply the principles found there to our Christian fellowship today. The report concludes that there can be no barrier to full Christian communion except "unbelief and disobedience." It does recognize that ethnic and cultural differences may lead individuals to seek fellowship in one congregation rather than another, but firmly denies that a church may bar any believer from its communion.

The report also challenges the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—largely white in its membership—to make special efforts to extend the gospel to other racial groups. Among the recommendations adopted by the Assembly was one calling on presbyteries and sessions to "implement the principles of Biblical race relations" and give attention to practical considerations growing out of these principles as suggested in the report.

We cannot do justice to this report in the space available here. And it is all too easy, in today's less tense racial situation, to say, "God bless all those other people," and then go on our usual ways. Certainly pastors could find pertinent suggestions for helpful sermons in this report, and sessions and presbyteries could fruitfully give time to its recommendations.

Attention also wandered at times.



Lunch break in the dining hall of Trinity College.

DIACONAL MINISTRIES

Formerly the Committee on General Benevolence, it is now more accurately named the Committee on Diaconal Ministries and seeks to do the work of the deacon in ministering mercy beyond the limits of the local congregation. Not many years back this was largely an agency for very limited help to "aged and infirm ministers" and some relief work in special situations.

But recently the Committee on Diaconal Ministries has found its help being sought more extensively. During 1973, the committee administered over \$25,000 from Orthodox Presbyterians for famine relief in Ethiopia, besides some \$32,000 for the committee's regular budget programs.

One area of rising concern is the need to provide adequately for ministers who are retired. We already have men living without sufficient income, drawing out their pension equity in order to survive. When the OPC was founded in 1936, most of its ministers were young men just out of seminary. Besides, there was a depression then and little could be done to provide for the future. But many of these have labored long and hard with very low incomes and have been unable to provide for retirement. Now they are the church's concern, and we shall certainly be hearing more about this urgent need in future months.

PLAN OF UNION

The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations has been working for some years together with the Fraternal Relations Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, to develop a plan under which the two denominations might unite. The first two parts of that plan were presented to the Assembly for its "approval," but not for final adoption.

The discussion that followed lasted all one day. The Assembly was urged to approve these two parts, the first containing a historical "Preamble" and "Testimony" to shared beliefs, and the second spelling out the proposed constitutional standards for a united church. After numerous moves to amend, divide, substitute, and otherwise modify the original recommendation, the Assembly did approve the two parts, but with certain crucial exceptions.

Most of the exceptions can be classed as kinks that need to be ironed out. But the critical exception is the rejection of the proposed alterations to the Larger Catechism designed



Dr. R. Laird Harris, fraternal delegate of the RPC/ES, addresses the Assembly.

to ensure "eschatological liberty" in the confessional standards. These alterations were urged by the Reformed Presbyterians in behalf of many of their ordained men who hold premillennial views and feel that the original wording of the Catechism excludes that understanding of our Lord's second coming.

The General Assembly, however, refused to agree to these changes and strongly suggested that they were neither necessary for "eschatological liberty" nor wise on several counts. What it means for prospects of a merger is difficult to tell. But it certainly appears to this observer that the Assembly approval "with exceptions" has stalled progress toward union for some time to come.

Whether the commissioners fully realized the likely effect of their action is also difficult to determine. Word from the Synod of the RPC/ES indicates considerable dismay over OPC Assembly action, but also indicates a desire to keep the door open. The *Guardian* plans to explore the whole situation in greater detail in a forthcoming issue.

COMPLAINTS

Three complaints against presbytery actions were before this Assembly. Only the thorough work of the Advisory Committees involved enabled the Assembly to deal with the rather complicated issues raised.

The most difficult complaint was lodged against the Presbytery of Northern California and charged it with error in judging that the pastor-elect of the church in Sunnyvale, California, was not qualified for the pastoral ministry. The man himself is an ordained minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and has been a pastor in that denomination for several years.

The Assembly was confronted with conflicting evidence in this complaint. It carefully refrained from either criticizing or endorsing either the pastor-elect or the Presbytery. It finally denied the complaint on the sole ground that the charge of error had not been demonstrated to be true. The decision was no easy one to reach, since it involved the personal concerns of the minister, the welfare of the Sunnyvale congregation, as well as the rights of a presbytery to judge of its own members. Probably no commissioner was happy with the outcome, but very few were prepared to argue against the final decision.

Certainly the decision does not solve all the problems in the situation, but then neither would any other decision have

solved them. It was very much one of those difficult and painful decisions that must be made with earnest prayer to the Lord to provide the remedies for the grief and hurt involved.

A lengthy letter was addressed to the Sunnyvale congregation expressing the Assembly's deep concern and urging them to accept the decision and strive to maintain unity in the church. Provision was made to send a representative of the Assembly to read the letter and answer questions if the session is willing.

Note: In last month's *Guardian*, the editor commented on this situation saying, "It seems unwise indeed for a man to move into a new post without reasonably strong assurance he will be found acceptable by the presbytery. Such a move puts extreme pressure on a presbytery besides all the grief that can arise on account of a hasty action." In the abstract, these sentences are eminently correct—and should be taken as a warning in the future. The situation in Sunnyvale does indeed prove the point. But it should be pointed out that the pastor-elect in this instance did have "reasonably strong assurance" of acceptability *before* he moved, having passed a theological examination before the presbytery and being encouraged by several presbyters to come ahead. Only after he had moved and the presbytery, after considerable delay, finally took up his examination again did it conclude that he lacked the necessary gifts for the pastorate.

Surely this very sad situation reflects no credit on the way we usually do things. It is to be hoped that others—congregations, presbyteries, and men answering a call—will bend over backwards to avoid a similar situation. Meanwhile, prayer for this man and his family, the congregation in Sunnyvale, and the members of that presbytery is surely in order.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Several other decisions can be reported in summary here. It was decided, despite considerable sentiment otherwise, to remain a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod at least until its 1976 meeting. A strongly worded letter of protest was addressed to the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland concerning that church's decision to support the World Council of Churches' "Program to Combat Racism" which supports "humanitarian purposes" of various terrorist groups in southern Africa.

It was also determined to seek fraternal relations with the National Presbyterian Church which has already invited such a relationship.

Impressed by the real benefits of meeting on a college campus, the Assembly determined to accept an invitation from Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa. The thought behind Geneva's invitation is that the OPC, the RPC/ES, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("Covenanter") might all meet simultaneously next year. The actual date is yet to be determined, and there seems to be some doubt that all three churches can accept the invitation.

Finally, this observer would comment on the very significant role played by ruling elders in this Assembly. Already younger ministers have taken up active roles in Assembly affairs. But this year saw several younger ruling elders present. These men repeatedly asked the penetrating questions and made the pertinent observations that enabled the Assembly to come to a clear focus. If representative assemblies continue to call forth the sort of ruling elder participation

Commissioners pick up travel money and prepare to journey home.

seen in the last two years, they are well worth it on that account alone.

To an outsider looking in, a general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church must often seem to be a peculiarly argumentative sort of affair. Yet to this participant, despite the "much disputing," there was an impression of deep-seated unity of purpose and commitment to the faith once delivered. And if there can be a reaching of decisions "with one accord," then we have reason to suppose the Spirit was at work. May the Lord and King of the church use the determinations of this assembly to his own glory as we all seek to carry out his commission to preach the gospel to every nation and so to edify the church that is his body on earth.

—J. J. Mitchell



General Assembly actions on OP-RP merger plan

The following actions were taken by the General Assembly concerning the proposed Plan of Union. They are given here without comment.

Approval with exceptions

The Assembly determined to "approve Parts I and II of the Plan of Union . . . as the Preamble to and Constitutional Basis of union, with (1) the exception of Questions 86-89 of the Larger Catechism, (2) the further exception that the [OPC] Committee on Ecumenicity and Inter-church Relations be instructed to propose to the joint ecumenical committees a revision of the Plan of Union to ensure that paragraph 1 of Chapter V of the Form of Government of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod not become part of the subordinate standards of any of the united presbyteries,* (3) the further exception that Part II.B.4.b. be recommitted for further study of the advisability of adopting unamendable provisions of the Form of Government,** and (4) with the further provision that the

*This paragraph was reported to be weak on the question of "special gifts" of the Holy Spirit in the church today.

**The RPC/ES has provisions guaranteeing control of local church property by the congregations that are unamendable and irrevocable, a provision that could create problems under changing circumstances that cannot be foreseen.

committee be instructed (a) to include in the Plan of Union a provision that Chapter I of the Standing Rules of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, appropriately modified to provide for reconciliation of the statistics to be used for determining apportionment, shall be in force for the second and subsequent Assemblies of the united church, or (b) to bring to the Forty-second Assembly some other proposal for implementation of the provisions of Chapter X, Section 2 of the [OPC] Form of Government for a representative Assembly."

The sense of the Assembly's action

It was further determined that "the 1974 Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, be informed that it is the sense of this Forty-first General Assembly that the text of the Larger Catechism, including Questions 86-89, for a united church should be that which was held by the Presbyterian Church of America at the time of the division that occurred in 1937.

"Among the grounds for this action are:

1. From the time of the adoption of the Westminster Standards by the Westminster Assembly in the 17th Century there have been those with different eschatological convictions who have been able to minister with complete liberty under those standards (adherents of

dispensational eschatology excepted).

2. That liberty has been adhered to, without any question, in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church ever since its founding in 1936.

3. Other Presbyterian bodies in the United States with whom both our churches have fellowship hold to the earlier form of the Larger Catechism, and a revision of that document would be an obstacle to closer fellowship.

4. It is the opinion of many in this Assembly that the proposed revisions allow leeway for the holding of dispensational views of eschatology under Constitution of the united church.

5. The doctrinal standards of the church should be amended only from considerations, flowing from the exegesis of the Scriptures, which show the former text to be, or possibly to be, contrary to Scripture.

6. The language of the original text of the Larger Catechism is so largely taken directly from Scripture that it commends itself to us as compared with the amended form that is under consideration.

7. Chapter XXXII and XXXIII of the Confession of Faith are consonant with the original text of the Larger Catechism questions under consideration."

Also, "that further consideration of the question of the original wording

of the Larger Catechism, Questions 86-89, be referred to the joint committees."

Future discussions proposed

It was also determined

"A. that the General Assembly urge the presbyteries to arrange and conduct at least two full-day joint meetings among ministers and elders of the united presbyteries as proposed by the Plan of Union (Part III. A) for the purpose of dealing with doctrinal and practical impediments to union and urge the General Synod of the RPC/ES to urge its presbyteries similarly; and

"B. that presbyteries include in their discussions the following:

- 1) the scope and character of eschatological liberty
- 2) dispensationalism
- 3) the apologetic significance of such doctrines as the doctrine of God, regeneration, faith, and the understanding of the Gospel
- 4) neo-pentecostalism
- 5) exercise of discipline in matters of faith and practice
- 6) the Scriptural mandate for organic union in the visible church; and

"C. that the presbyteries report significant findings from the joint meetings to the [OPC] Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Rela-

OPC/CRC . . . A Significant Meeting

The campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids was the setting of a joint meeting on April 26-27 of the Interchurch Relations committees of the Christian Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian Churches.

The meeting was marked by warmth of affection among Christian brothers, mutuality of confidence, and congeniality of spirit. It was (is) our common conviction that essentially we are one church—our doctrinal standards are identical except for minor details; we are committed to the Reformed faith; neither one of our communions will seek to compromise it; and our Kingdom goals and ideals are the same.

In view of this unity that we have in Christ, we feel that we would be derelict in duty unless we made conscious effort to deepen the relationships between us. This sentiment was voiced both by the Christian Reformed Church in its synod in 1972 and by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in its general assembly in 1973.

There has been some "dragging of

feet," however, as far as implementation is concerned. We therefore adopted a series of resolutions looking toward closer relationships. We need advice and counsel from each other and so we urge our respective synod and assembly to keep each other informed on the studies being made of common problems. We likewise remind the various agencies of the church that, in accord with the 1972 and 1973 decisions, we are to explore areas in which we can work in concert (youth work; missionary work; religious literature; and the like).

Suggestions were also made with a view to more pulpit exchanges, participation in each other's Ministers' Institutes, and a broader and more active fraternal delegate function at the meetings of our synod and general assembly. We felt called to renewed effort in bringing the two communions together into a viable, cooperative relationship, one that befits the real unity that we have in Christ.

—LeRoy B. Oliver

tions or the [RPCES] Fraternal Relations Committee by March 1, 1975."

In a later action, the General Assembly determined to accept an invitation from Geneva College to hold the

1975 Assembly there simultaneously with the meetings of the Synods of both the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("Covenanter").

Actions of RPC/ES Synod on Plan of Union

The General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, meeting in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, also took actions regarding the proposed Plan of Union with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The Synod discussed the merger plan on Tuesday, May 28, and had before it copies of the OPC General Assembly actions adopted during the previous week.

In response to the recommendation of the Joint Committee preparing a proposed Plan of Union, the Synod determined to "approve Parts I and II of the proposed Plan of Union recommended by the Joint Committee."

An attempt to modify this motion by adding the words "with the exception that the Larger Catechism be retained in its original form" (in conformity with the action of the OPC General Assembly) was debated at length and finally lost. Several commissioners then recorded their affirmative votes on this proposed amendment.

In response to the OPC General Assembly actions, the Synod passed the following motion:

"Whereas the 41st General Assembly of the Orthodox

Presbyterian Church has taken exception to the Proposed Plan of Union's changes in the Larger Catechism, Questions 86-89, and

Whereas they have stated as a ground for their action that it is the opinion of many in their Assembly that the proposed revisions allow leeway for the holding of "dispensational" views under the Constitution of the united church, and

Whereas there can be no real union without mutual confidence in each other's doctrinal commitment,

We, therefore, believe it is of utmost importance that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church satisfy itself as to the commitment of the RPC, ES to the Westminster Standards as further steps are taken to achieve union, and urge our presbyteries to meet with the presbyteries of the OPC according to the recommendation of the 41st General Assembly of the OPC. To assist with this satisfaction we forward to the OPC and to the Committee on Ecumenicity our previous statements on dispensationalism."

EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

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P.O. Box 1890
Decatur, Georgia 30031

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GO STAND SPEAK
all the words of this life" Acts 5:20

Conference Information:

Conference begins with Tuesday evening address, July 30 and concludes with close of Sunday evening address, August 4, 1974.

SCHEDULE: Tuesday

- 7:30 p.m. Evening Worship (7:30 - 9:00)
- 9:00 p.m. "Youth Happening" (9:00 -)

SCHEDULE: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday

- 7:00 a.m. Prayer and Testimony Time
- 9:00 a.m. First Seminar (9:00 - 10:00)
- 10:15 a.m. The Bible Hour (10:15 - 11:15)
- 11:30 a.m. Second Seminar (11:30 - 12:30)
- 3:00 p.m. Optional Seminars (3:00 - 4:00)
- 7:30 p.m. Evening Worship (7:30 - 9:00)
- 9:00 p.m. "Youth Happening" (9:00 -)

SCHEDULE: Sunday

- 7:00 a.m. Prayer and Testimony Time
- 9:45 a.m. Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship
- 7:30 p.m. Evening Worship
- 9:00 p.m. "Youth Happening"

DIRECTIONS TO MONTREAT:

Take Interstate 40, US 70 east out of Asheville, North Carolina about 15 miles to Black Mountain, North Carolina. At the main intersection in Black Mountain turn north and proceed about 5 miles. You will come immediately into the Montreat Conference Center. Once into the Conference Center we will have signs to direct you to the registration area.



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Hopewell, VA.



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ADDRESSES

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GO STAND SPEAK
all the words of this life" Acts 5:20

MONTREAT, NORTH CAROLINA

JULY 30 - AUGUST 4, 1974

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Evangelistic Preaching
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Evangelism to Troubled Youth
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of The Scriptures
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Evangelism in Reformed Faith
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The Christian Home
DR. EDMOND CLOWNEY
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Evangelism to
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HONORS AT GENEVA COLLEGE
Beaver Falls, Pa.—Mr. Robert Y. Eckardt of Vineland, N.J., graduated *summa cum laude* from Geneva College on May 7. He was also the salutatorian of his class.

Mr. Eckardt, a chemistry major,

plans to do graduate work at the University of Indiana.

The accompanying photograph shows Bob with his parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Robert W. Eckardt; he is pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Vineland.

Here & There

Whippany, N.J.—“Family '74—A Series in Christian Living” is the title of a two-month schedule of studies sponsored by the Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Meeting each Tuesday evening in July and August, the series will replace the usual VBS and is designed for the whole family. Sessions will be two hours, from 7 to 9 p.m.

CONGREGATION FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE PCUS
Denver, N.C.—A state judge has ruled that a congregation cannot withdraw from the Presbyterian Church, U.S. because its Book of Church Order has nothing in it about disaffiliating. He declared null and void a June 3 vote of Unity Presbyterian Church and ruled they must remain in the PCUS.

The congregation then voted unanimously to leave Unity Church and, with the help of the Lord, build a new church. Over 150 members are included.

To Glorify God

The National Presbyterian Church extends the right hand of fellowship to all Christians who believe the Bible to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God written; and who are committed to the Reformed faith and presbyterial order. We earnestly solicit your prayers and pledge our cooperation, in all giving praise and glory to God.

(By order of the First General Assembly, Birmingham, Ala., Dec. 6, 1973. Committee on Interchurch Relations, Box 3108, Asheville, NC 28802; Rev. G. Aiken Taylor, Chm.)

New school challenge in Pittsburgh
 Based on Westminster Confession, in mixed church community. Needs teacher-administrator for combined grades (1st - 3rd). At least two years' experience preferred. Write:
 D. M. Poundstone
 1419 Beaver Rd.
 Osborne, PA 15143

Openings in Leesburg, Va., area
 * Elementary teacher for art and music for grades 1-6 and H. S. choral classes.
 * Elementary teacher for English, Literature, and History for grades 4-6, with some typing-filing exper. for part-time secretarial work.
 * German teacher for all grade levels. Contact:
 Ed or Gwen Urban
 Leesburg (Va.) Christian School
 703-777-4220 (call collect).

BULLETIN—Mr. and Mrs. L. Richard Burnap and their two children were killed in an auto accident on June 2. The family were members of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hanover Park, Ill., and Mr. Burnap was book editor for David C. Cook. Pub. Co.

NEW CHURCH ON CAPE COD

West Barnstable, Mass.—Presbyterian worship services have begun on Cape Cod. Twenty-six adults and four teen-agers attended the first meeting on May 5, and additional persons have attended subsequent meetings. Called the Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod, the group has applied to the Presbytery of New York and New England to receive them as a particular Orthodox Presbyterian congregation.

Worship services are held at 7 p.m. on Sunday evenings at the Cape Cod Conservatory of Music and Arts, just off Route 6 in West Barnstable.

Vacationers are cordially welcomed, and pulpit supply for the summer months is being sought. Contact: Mr. Fred Buhler, 76 Webber's Path, West Yarmouth, MA 02673.

Pittsgrove, N.J.—Mr. Richard Mitchell was licensed to preach the gospel at the April 23 meeting of the Presbytery of New Jersey. (On Saturday of the same week he was united in marriage with Deborah Robinson.) He will be serving as stated supply of Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church here until the church can secure a replacement for the Rev. Lendall Smith. The Smiths are making final preparations for a late summer departure for Taiwan and service as missionaries there.

Houlton, Me.—Mr. Lewis Ruff, recent graduate of Westminster Seminary, was licensed to preach the gospel at the April 16 meeting of the Presbytery of New York and New England. He will be serving Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church here as stated supply.

Bride's Book

or, "Helpful Suggestions" for the Bride-to-be from the right Book

JULIE ANN STONE

In our natural conceit we always feel "new" ideas originate with us. "Not so!" says the Bible. "There is nothing new under the sun." However, we don't always manage to have God's viewpoint, and many things seem new to us.

When we come together for a bride's "shower," we are doing nothing new; this is an ancient, world-wide cultural habit. Females of all ages will turn out for a shower. The married women will give a share from their experience and storehouse; the younger unmarried glean ideas from this sharing that are "new" and helpful to them.

Those invited to a shower may be asked to share a favorite recipe with the guest of honor. And no doubt each of us would ponder long over the choice to make. Let's carry this idea a bit further. Suppose you were asked to contribute to a "thought box." What would you feel most helpful to the bride? What idea or experience could you condense to a sentence or two on a 3x5 card?

Two "Bride's Books"

This very idea of brief helpful thoughts or suggestions has been expanded into "Bride's Books." These books or magazines offer every type of advice and information one could imagine. But I wonder how many brides or experienced wives consult the ultimate in "Bride's Books"—yes, I mean the Bible.

You didn't know the Bible had this kind of advice to offer? Let's compare some "Bride's Book" suggestions with the Bible's teachings:

Clothing for the bride

Bride's Book: "Since he has seen you in your present clothing, all of it should be replaced by a totally new wardrobe, shoes, coats, undergarments, everything."

How degrading! Is he marrying me or my new clothes? No matter how well dressed, how beautiful one is, all of this will fade. Will he still love the me that must inevitably change?

Consider the Bible's thought: "Your adornment should not be outward—braided hair, putting on gold trinkets, or putting on robes; instead it should be the inner personality of the heart with the imperishable qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit, something of surpassing value in God's sight. For in this way the holy women of the past, who fixed their hope on God, adorned themselves, sub-

missive as they were to their own husbands" (1 Peter 3: 3-5).

What a difference! Now I can feel that the real him sees something of value in the real me. He can see beyond my outer shell. Do you see the thinking that lies behind these two schools of thought?

The honeymoon cottage

Bride's Book: "Honeymoon cottage for rent. Hidden cameras record your every movement day or night from the minute he carries you over the threshold."

My husband nearly fainted on this one! Can you imagine how brazen a young woman would have to be to agree to this? And imagine all the people who would view these films during the developing process, not to mention anyone else in the company.

What a complete departure this woman is from the Bible's portrait of the godly woman. We are told to be prudent, quiet, chaste, meek, and faithful in all things. No Christian woman could qualify for that cottage.

Personality check-lists.

Most "Bride's Books" have endless check-lists of qualities—yours, his, both sets of parents, etc. But here is one drawn from Scripture:

1. *Be kind and generous to guests and strangers.* It's not always easy to be the gracious hostess when your husband gives short notice. Even so, this is a must. Keep some emergency company food on hand, and greet guests with genuine pleasure. Not only will you then enjoy the fellowship, but the Bible says some of us have thereby entertained angels unawares.

2. *Do the chores quickly and quietly.* These things are your tasks, and you must learn to do them. And smile! When your husband comes home, don't act like a martyr just because you ironed his shirts that day.

3. *Manage the household money wisely.* In this day and age, we have been sold the idea that marriages most often flounder over sex. Surveys prove this is not the case. It isn't sex, nor even in-laws, that cause most break-ups—it's money!

Yes, money. You see, most of our parents have been married about twenty years by the time we marry. By then most of them are past the hand-to-mouth stage financially. Many girls enter marriage either wanting to be supported in the manner to which they've become accustomed—or to which they hope soon to be accus-

tomed. When young husbands can't provide their every whim, the girl is disappointed with his earning power. The husband, on the other hand, feels disillusioned by his bride's shallow sense of values and begins to feel that he was trapped for his earning potential alone.

Whether God provides a little or a lot, you must learn to live within that amount. Not only can it be done, but it will turn out that some of your fondest memories are of the days when the two of you were struggling together and once had to make one pound of hamburger last for several days. These things build your marriage.

Husband, wife, in the right order

How do two people come together to make a unity? There's more to be checked off, and the area of defining the role of husband and wife is crucial.

4. *Defer to your husband in all things.* Women's Lib didn't originate the idea that women are superior to men. Eve did, and every woman in her heart feels she is superior to men—and every man feels he is superior to women. And that's the sin in both groups!

There is a God-given structure for marriage: the Lord first, then the husband, then the wife. Whenever we change this structure, we are in for trouble. After we marry, many women immediately set out (in ways known only to womankind) to wrest the throne from their husbands. Often they succeed, and in later years these same women suddenly feel cheated. Well, they have been cheated.

We always cheat ourselves when we don't follow God's plan for us. Often women tell me they want to reverse the process they have so carefully devised. They want the husband back on the throne. But this proves to be a very difficult and painful process for everyone. It isn't easy to unlearn the habits of the past and to learn new ways. Still, it's never too late to start—and it's worth the effort to seek God's paths again.

5. *Recognize yourself as "weaker" than your husband.* That's what the Bible says, and it's true. This goes along with what we just discussed. We are different, and women are weaker. But aren't you glad? Any married woman who recognizes this truth will tell you it's the only way to go!

It's the way to go because it's the way God made us.

He's more manly because God made him to be that way—stronger, and more naturally the leader. To try to have it any other way is to break the patterns God established.

6. *Recognize yourself as a "help" with your husband.* This is the other side of the situation. The woman was created for the man, the Bible says, not the man for the woman. But that means he has a real need for her, and she is to be a real help to him, fitted to be a sharer with him.

The Bible says that wives are to be wise. And the wise woman, according to Scripture, isn't the brainy one, but the woman who fears the Lord. She is a spiritually wise person, one who reveres God. And she uses her wisdom, her spiritual sense of values, her Bible-taught judgments, to build up her own house. So often we foolishly tear our own houses down—and there's not a married woman who doesn't know what that means. But the gift of wisdom is from God; we need to pray for it.

7. *Choose wise counselors.* We women have this thing about gathering together to talk—and to complain about our lot. All of us do this. But girls, choose your counselors with care! Any counselor, any confidante—and I don't care who it is—who doesn't use God's Word as the standard for giving advice, is not only the enemy of your marriage but the enemy of your soul as well!

So, suppose we manage to make the right marks on this check-list, to try and do all these things. What will it profit us? What will happen in our lives? What's in it for us?

There is a Bible verse I feel epitomizes marriage: "Many waters cannot quench love." The true meaning of this word "love" will be to you like an ever more beautiful flower as its petals slowly open one by one to reveal the wonders of its depths.

Let us pray to our heavenly Father, for we are frail and often fail. Yet God has made us so and is fully able to help us be what he would have us to be. May we measure up to our Lord's standard, and as wives and women may we bring glory to his Name!

Mrs. Stone is a member of Garden Grove (Calif.) Orthodox Presbyterian Church. After offering these thoughts at a bridal shower, she was persuaded to make them available to a wider audience.

18th Annual PENSACOLA THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

Pensacola, Fla.—August 4-11 are the dates for this year's Pensacola Theological Institute at McIlwain Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Featured speakers are the Rev. Mariano Di Gangi of Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship; Dr. Di Gangi will speak on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Dr. O. Palmer Robertson, professor in Old Testament theology at Westminster Seminary, will lecture on Zechariah. Dr. Norman E. Harper, professor of Christian education at Reformed Seminary, will speak on a Christian philosophy of education. Mr. Terry Gyger, president of Men in Action, will speak on missions and church growth.

For further information address:

Pensacola Theological Institute
McIlwain Memorial Presbyterian Church
1220 E. Blount St.
Pensacola, FL 32503

REFORMATION CONFERENCE IN BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham, Ala.—The First Annual Reformation Conference is to be held at Faith Presbyterian Church here on August 1-4, 1974.

Featured speakers will be the Rev. Paul Helm, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Liverpool and an editor of *The Banner of Truth*; the Rev. John Reisinger, editor of *Sword and Trowel*; and the Rev. Gerald Morgan, pastor of St. Paul Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Miss. The conference will be for both the professional and the layman, with discussions on: Reformed Evangelism, Prayer, and the Christian Family.

Further information may be obtained from:

Dan P. Griswold, Publicity Chairman
Faith Presbyterian Church
3117 Highway 280 South
Birmingham, AL 35243

from one woman to another

(Continued from page 83.)

what was to happen. They were greeted by sounds of the Olympic theme (taped ahead of time) and the impressive ceremony of lighting the torch. Gold and silver medals were awarded each week to winners of the contest events. A mimeographed newspaper, "The Mediterranean Weekly," was prepared by one of the students and the young people came early to each weekly meeting to get their copy and read all about it. The BibliOlympics finished its successful season with a Mediterranean banquet when parents were invited to join in the fun.

A decorated brick

One of Mrs. Fikkert's ideas for rejuvenating a tired ladies' society was begun as a study in Nehemiah. At the first meeting the ladies were welcomed by a sign that read: "Join the Construction Crew." A pile of bricks sat on a table in the front of the room, and as she introduced the Bible study, Mrs. Fikkert passed out the bricks till each lady had one.

To their astonishment, the ladies were told to take their bricks home and bring them back next time. They might decorate the brick in any way they wished, but would have to explain what they did and why. (During the month, Doris says, she heard rumors of discontent and unhappiness with this plan; so she "laid low" till the time of the next meeting.)

Each lady had been instructed to bring her brick in a brown paper bag, which each one did. At the proper time each was asked to show how she had decorated her brick and tell what it meant to her.

One brick illustrated a favorite hymn. Another was a flower garden saying, "Bloom where you are." One was made to look like a wagon with wheels, and the woman who made it expressed her wish that the Lord would keep her moving on as he had done thus far. Another had a cross with five red hearts on its left and five white hearts on the right; this expressed the woman's longing to bring each of her five children to the cross where they might find Jesus and be made pure as he is pure.

Many of Mrs. Fikkert's ideas involved simple handwork projects. In describing a team effort by the women of the Cedar Grove church to do neighborhood evangelism in a nearby town, she gave details of their organizing plan with committees for advertising, table decorations, refreshments, travel, nursery, crafts, as well as Bible studies. Called "The Spice of Life," the ten-week program included a coffee hour, craft time, get-acquainted fun, and Bible study. The first week they prayed for at least two to come, and fifty-four women showed up! The group felt that coordinating a craft idea, table decorations and refreshments, together with the Bible study, made a meaningful impression on all who came.

These ideas bear out Mrs. Fikkert's belief that God has given us the ability to be creative and to share this creativity with others, for the glory of God. The women who aided her in this project learned how important it is to make coffee, to work out some crafts, and to show that you care when you tell someone about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And other observations

On Wednesday morning the Assembly began to consider the proposed plan of union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. Observers of this discussion in-



Mrs. Doris Fikkert demonstrates ideas for creative Bible teaching for women's groups.

cluded a class of juniors from Timothy Christian High School. Some of us thought they would be turned off by the complicated parliamentary procedure which the Assembly was enmeshed in when the class arrived; others thought they might gain a bit of insight into church history in the making. Several of them did read background material from copies of the *Guardian* and mimeographed recommendations before the Assembly.

During the week I had opportunity to talk to Dr. Laird Harris, fraternal delegate from the RPC/ES. We talked about the women's tea and he asked about our presbyterials and whether we had anything like their Synodical. This corresponds, I suppose, to our women's meetings during the Assembly. He also mentioned a presbyterial in Pennsylvania where over a hundred women met together. I wish we Orthodox Presbyterian women had known and some of us had been there (though perhaps some were).

The Assembly continues to encourage the presbyteries to meet with the corresponding RPC/ES presbyteries to share fellowship, get to know each other, discuss "thorny" questions, etc. I can't help thinking, Dorothy, that we women could be doing a lot more to help in this. Why don't we have more fellowship between Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterian women? We certainly could be sharing our gifts for hospitality and caring for one another. Perhaps we could have neighborhood Bible studies together. Let's talk this up in our presbyterial meetings, what do you say?

One thing that made my ears perk up was a remark to the Assembly by the chairman of the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government. He said that the committee was considering the possibility that women might be elected as deacons. What do you think about this? Would our women be interested? What sort of diaconal work would they do?

One commissioner said that this would not be biblical. But maybe we should do some study on this to see if it is a viable option for us or not. I'll be interested in your reactions. The committee will be deciding on this during the year and perhaps we women could have some input into their discussion. Want to write them a letter about it?

This has been a long letter, for sure. But I did want you to know this bit of insight into the non-theological side of a General Assembly. I do hope you will consider attending next year. Perhaps we can spend some time together there; I hope so.

Love to all,
Lois

The Changing Scene

HENRY W. CORAY

In an article in a recent issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, literary critic Edmund Fuller has noted some interesting observations in the views of the renowned psychiatrist, Karl Menninger. He quotes Menninger as saying: "I believe there is 'sin' which is expressed in ways which cannot be subsumed under verbal artifacts such as 'crime,' 'disease,' 'delinquency,' 'deviancy.' There *is* immorality; there *is* unethical behavior; there is wrongdoing." Mr. Fuller proceeds to stand up and cheer.

He goes on to quote Dr. Menninger further: "The wrongness of the sinful act lies not merely in its nonconformity, its departure from the accepted, appropriate way of behavior, but in an implicitly aggressive quality—a ruthlessness, a hurting, a breaking away from God and from the rest of humanity, a partial alienation, or act of rebellion." Moreover, Menninger does not hesitate to oppose B. F. Skinner and other psychiatrists who dismiss personal responsibility as a myth. No, man stands before God as a responsible moral agent who must give an account of his deeds and misdeeds.

Dr. Menninger is a welcome voice crying in the wilderness of confusion. Due to Skinner and his school of neo-behavioristic psychology, a great many modern doctors of the mind have been putting the blame for the ills of the world on environment while placing the offender on a pedestal. Thus, for example, when a gunman shoots down an innocent bystander on the street without provocation, the behaviourist rushes up to the murderer with the smoking gun and says, "Are you all right?"

I am always filled with renewed admiration for Paul when I read his declaration before Festus: "If I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die" (Acts 25:11). This is manly acceptance of responsibility. Our coddled society needs a fresh transference of it.

The Westminster Assembly

One wonders how many Presbyterians appreciate the background of the documents known as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, those noble secondary standards adopted by a number of Reformed churches.

It might increase our respect and affection for them if we realized that they represent a labor of love that spanned a period of six years, 1643 to 1649, with a total of 1163 sessions having been held. On July 1, 1643, sixty-nine Christian scholars met by order of Parliament in the chapel of King Henry VIII, (a) "for the settling of the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England," and (b) "to vindicate and clear the doctrine of the Church of England from all false calumnies and aspersions."

At the initial session of the Assembly each member solemnly vowed "to maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what he believed to be most agreeable to the Word of God, nor in point of discipline but what may make most for God's glory and the peace and good of his church" (Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, pp.

16, 17). Thereafter, the vow was repeated once a month during the entire Assembly.

The historian Froude asserts that the Westminster divines represented the most able body of scholars ever to gather under one roof. They were men of profound scholarship and cultural breadth, learned in the classics, and steeped in philosophical thought. Yet the significant fact is that they deliberately spurned the use of human reasoning and dialectics and rather applied themselves to theology, "the queen of sciences." The formulations in the documents certainly reflect this. The language, from beginning to end, is intensely biblical, and thus majestic, edifying, invigorating.

Let it be thought that their labors added up to intellectual activity only, we should remember that, as reported by one observer, "large prayer was made." One day of every month was set aside for prayer and fasting, as those godly men pled earnestly with God for deep and clear insights into the meaning of the holy Oracles. In the nature of the case mistakes were made, as Warfield points out. Yet in general the formulations show a marvelous grasp of "what we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man."

In churches where *Trinity Hymnal* is used, worshippers would do well if, prior to the opening of the service, they would turn to the Confession of Faith in the back of the book and meditate on a passage. Also, some churches employ the practice of reading through the Confession at Sabbath evening services. It is an enriching experience to all present.

Garner Ted and the Bible

My good wife and I,
Driving along a highway,
Tuned in on a message
By Garner Ted Armstrong—
Self-styled prophet of Pasadena.
We listened in astonishment
As he confidently predicted
Great catastrophic events
Soon to occur in Russia and Japan,
East and West Germany, England,
And even in the United States.
He insisted it was all in the Book—
Which the average minister
Keeps back from his members—
That only he, Garner Ted, was
Informing the public openly
About "The World Tomorrow."
When he had finished
Pounding the public with platitudes,
My wife, wide-eyed, said to me,
"Isn't it wonderful
"The things he gets out of the Bible—
"That aren't there?"

The Old Chinese Philosopher

The Elders of the Church

. . . *division of labor within the office*

LAWRENCE R. EYRES

In this concluding article, I want to lay stress on the fact that the Spirit's qualifying gifts are given to different men in differing measure. While it is fundamental to understand that all God-appointed elders need to be "apt to teach" and able to rule well, and that each is obliged to exercise himself in both of these areas to some degree, nevertheless *they will not all exercise themselves according to an equal measure.*

Our Lord called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles, while Peter was to go to the "Circumcision." Even among the original twelve, the disciples were far from equal in gifts or ability to use them. Paul (in 1 Timothy 5:17) implies as much when he says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine."

While it is sad that even then some did not rule well, it is not surprising that some who did rule well labored in the word and doctrine whereas others did not. That is, some devoted themselves more extensively to the Word than did others. Though this passage furnishes some ground for the present-day distinction between the "teaching elder" and the "ruling elder," I doubt that the distinction was that "cut and dried" in Paul's mind or in the practice of the early church. Rather, there seems to be a widely different degree of involvement between certain elders and others in their ministry. The present article seeks to translate this into reasonable principles for action.

Diversity in labor

In today's Reformed churches, the diversity of labor within the eldership is not hard to find. Even among ministers, some labor harder and longer than others (without suggesting reproach to those who labor less). Some ruling elders have more time to give to their respective ministries than do others.

As I have already remarked, no man ought to be put into the office who cannot or will not give a considerable portion both of time and strength to the eldership. Even so, it is a fact that some most worthy men have, in God's providence, less free time and strength away from their worldly toils than is true for others. Some have greater family responsibilities (which they must not neglect!). Some have a stronger physique than others. And some men reach retirement with many years of vigor and good health to make available for the work of Christ in his church.

What can be said for a healthy diversity of labor within this highest continuing office in Christ's church? First, at the risk of being redundant, I will stress again those duties that fall upon all elders; second, I would list certain tasks that elders may follow by way of semi-specialization.

Common tasks for all elders

All elders must be active in each of these areas: 1. They must all minister the Word to, and pray with, the members of the church individually. And here, since I have not done

so before, let me commend the practice of "zone" oversight.

In former generations, our Presbyterian forefathers practiced the division of the parish into equal geographical areas, giving one elder responsibility in each such zone. Not having "parishes" in the older sense, our zones must be more arbitrarily determined without reference to the location of a family as the primary factor.

In any case, dividing the whole congregation into "zones" assures an element of oversight to every elder. In some churches a two-man team might be assigned one zone. Or the pastor himself may conduct annual visitation of the families, taking with him the elder assigned to the particular home he is visiting. This is a good method for "breaking in" men new to this sort of thing. But it should not become the normal practice because the elder will tend to be a "silent partner" in the presence of the minister.

High on the priority list for discussion and prayer should be the mutual exchange of counsel between pastor and elders concerning the scope, content and effectiveness of the pastor's pulpit ministry. Of course, such an exchange needs to be basically constructive and positive; elders are never to forget that their pastor's ministry is, in a very real sense, their own even when he stands in the pulpit to proclaim the gospel.

I hasten to add that all such devices are only devices. They have their drawbacks. Some families would prefer one elder above another—which could result in certain elders having no families to supervise if such choices were honored. Then too, stated visitations sometimes cause families to tense up and so fail to get full benefit from visits. Nevertheless, devices are useful. Without them I doubt if every elder would receive a share in this ministry.

2. All elders must engage in *ongoing Bible study and prayer* for the blessing of God upon the entire flock. Here the pastor needs to commend this activity to his "co-pastors" (elders are co-shepherds in the scriptural sense). Pastors must see to it that their brethren in labor are spiritually growing and living, taking heed to themselves and to the flock (Acts 20:28).

3. All elders need to take time, individually and in session, to discuss and *pray about the concerns of their flock.* While this may be combined with regular session meetings, such an important function can be crowded out unless time is set aside for the purpose and jealously guarded.

4. It will not hurt to say again that the crown of the labors of the elders of any church is their *sitting as Christ's representatives* in session meetings. Every elder must participate in every meeting of his session unless providentially prevented from doing so.

Areas of specialization

Within the common functions of the office of elder there are some specializations, areas into which an elder may

enter who has special gifts and abilities.

1. I would place *teaching* at the head of the list. This is beyond the normal teaching that all elders are obliged to carry out. Some elders are gifted as teachers, proving their gifts to edification in Sunday school classes, in midweek prayer services, or group Bible study.

But I would raise a caution here. It is only natural that some men aspire to teach. Nevertheless, some who aspire may well be without the gifts or experience needed. Let every man prepare himself, praying for the improvement of the gifts he has and for opportunity to use them. But let him wait patiently upon the Lord until his fellow elders judge him ready.

2. Some elders are gifted as *personal counsellors* and sought out by those in the church who are weighed down with problems. This is especially true with those men who show ability in working with young people. In this area too, let those who appear to have the gifts be urged to prepare themselves. The best available preparation in study and prayer is all too little for one who is thrust into a counselling ministry in these days. There are many good aids available, but let them be chosen with careful discrimination.

3. Some men of God have gifts for *organization*. How useful these gifts can be today when our homeland is becoming increasingly a "foreign" mission field! There is urgent need for the church to break through the shell of conventionality and confront a lost world with the gospel.

Branch Sunday schools, chapels, vacation Bible schools, home Bible study groups, are all available means. But the work needs to be carefully done, and organization is necessary. The elder with organizing gifts need not be the pastor or principal teaching elder. But a man with gifts for handling all the details may well prove to be God's "organization man" in his church. By all means a man of God with such gifts should be given scope to use them that everything may be done "decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

4. Still others have gifts for *financial stewardship*. Though the deacons need to be concerned to distribute the gifts of God's people appropriately, and though the church treasurer may well be a deacon or not ordained at all, it does not follow that the eldership is so heavenly an office as to be of no earthly good. An elder with gifts for financial stewardship should be given opportunity to use them.

Such a man can be a great help to the deacons and the treasurer, suggesting more prudent use of the Lord's money, encouraging them to better stewardship and fiscally sound practices. Such a man can also be of real help to the church, fostering and encouraging the biblical teaching that giving is a grace from God (2 Corinthians 8, 9) and not a necessary chore. Here is a spiritual ministry to challenge the best efforts of God's spiritual men!

5. Other specialized ministries deserve mention. An elder with gifts in music may be employed to develop the gifts of the whole flock in the praise of God. A ministry of writing and editing can be valuable in many churches; a newsletter that goes beyond trivia to be a true spiritual organ is a task worthy of any man with the special abilities. Others may have the rare gift of stating biblical truth in the language of the people so that it may be understood and received. In fact, every distinct gift of God should find a place of exercise in the work of the church; if God gave it, God meant it to be used.

6. One more specialty deserves separate treatment. All elders need to be men of prayer, but God does raise up some to be *giants of prayer*. Who does not thrill at the names of men like Robert Murray M'Cheyne, George Muller, or Praying Hyde? True, the Lord has not been pleased to grant many such men to us today. But there is desperate need for special power before the throne of grace.

To be sure, the Spirit is no respecter of persons, and may well give the gift of prayer to anyone. God gave such a ministry to Anna in the temple (Luke 2:36, 37). Yet elders, just because their office indicates that they have advanced in sanctification, should tend to excell in the life of prayer. The times call for men of this kind. May God give us many who know how to lay hold on God beyond that degree which most of us have attained.

A word of warning

I believe that every man of God needs to be warned to beware of the devil's temptation to jealousy about the superior gifts or tasks of another. If one or two men stand out from the rest in any particular gift, let the others rejoice that God has given such gifts to his church. The other comparable danger is the temptation to pride in those with exceptional gifts. The devil delights in finding such an opening (1 Peter 5:8; cf. John 3:22-25; Philipians 1:12-21; 1 Timothy 3:6).

So I bring this series to a close. The articles have been designed to be of special use to those who bear rule in Christ's church and those who seek the eldership. But let no one think these subjects are of no concern to even the least believer. Choosing, ordaining, obeying, and sitting at the feet of God's called men is the job of all the church.

Pray that Christ's Spirit will continue his working in all our churches; that he will call those choice men, making them eager and willing to serve the Head of the church; that such men may be spiritually recognized by the people; that superior grace may be given them to serve their Lord long and well; that they may stand ready with Paul "not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

Questions for Pondering:

1. One man appears to have all the gifts for eldership, but declines the office because of business pressures. Should he be pressed to reconsider and reorder his business affairs, or should his excuse be accepted?
2. What personal qualities are desirable in one who counsels, either in the context of home visitation or in a more specialized way?
3. Should the pastor do all the specialized calling—on the sick or burdened—or should it be shared with the other elders?
4. Do you think a man should be made an elder because he seems to have one of the gifts of specialized service mentioned?
5. Are the standards for eldership set forth in these articles so high that good men will be discouraged from seeking or accepting the office?

Much interest has been shown over the months as this series by the Rev. Mr. Eyres has unfolded. That interest, and the value to be derived from the material, has led to plans for publishing the whole series in book form. We hope to announce the details of this very soon.

The Presbyterian Guardian

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Attack on mission field



Anna Strikwerda

Deborah M. Dortzbach

BULLETIN-June 22. Mrs. Dortzbach was released well and unharmed; due in US in late July.



On Monday, May 27, four armed men invaded the Mihireta Yesus (Compassion of Jesus) Hospital in Ghinda, Ethiopia. At gunpoint they forced two nurses on duty in the clinic to accompany them. Shortly afterward one of the nurses was severely beaten and shot through the head. The other was taken to the camp of the terrorists where she is still being held captive.

The hospital is part of the Orthodox Presbyterian mission in Eritrea, the Red Sea coastal province of Ethiopia. The murdered nurse, Miss Anna Strikwerda, was a citizen of the Netherlands, and had served at the hospital since January 1966. The second nurse, Mrs. Deborah M. Dortzbach, with her husband Karl, had come in July 1973 for an internship on the mission field before he

completes his seminary training.

Anna Strikwerda was loved by the people; she was especially concerned for the orphans. When her funeral was held in Ghinda a few days later, over two thousand came to pay tribute to her.

The Dortzbach's are expecting their first child in the fall, and her pregnancy adds to the deep concern for her. But a few days after her abduction, a letter from Debbie indicated that she was well and was "praising the Lord as I hope you are." The letter also stated a demand for medical supplies as a condition for her release. In his reply, Karl insisted that she be released before supplies were sent.

Meanwhile, other missions in the province have closed their medical and other works. They demand that

Mrs. Dortzbach be released and assurance given that no further interference with foreign workers occur. The terrorists are thought to be members of the Eritrean Liberation Front, who seek to separate Eritrea from Ethiopia.

Word has come that Debbie is in good health and being given reasonable care. It is also believed the ELF is under pressure to turn her free. But at this writing (June 11), she is still a captive.

May the sovereign Lord sustain Deborah in her need, uphold Karl in his time of trial, comfort those who mourn for Anna, and bring new life to Karl and Debbie even as the Spirit of life makes green a barren land. May the wrath of men bring praise to the Lord of grace!