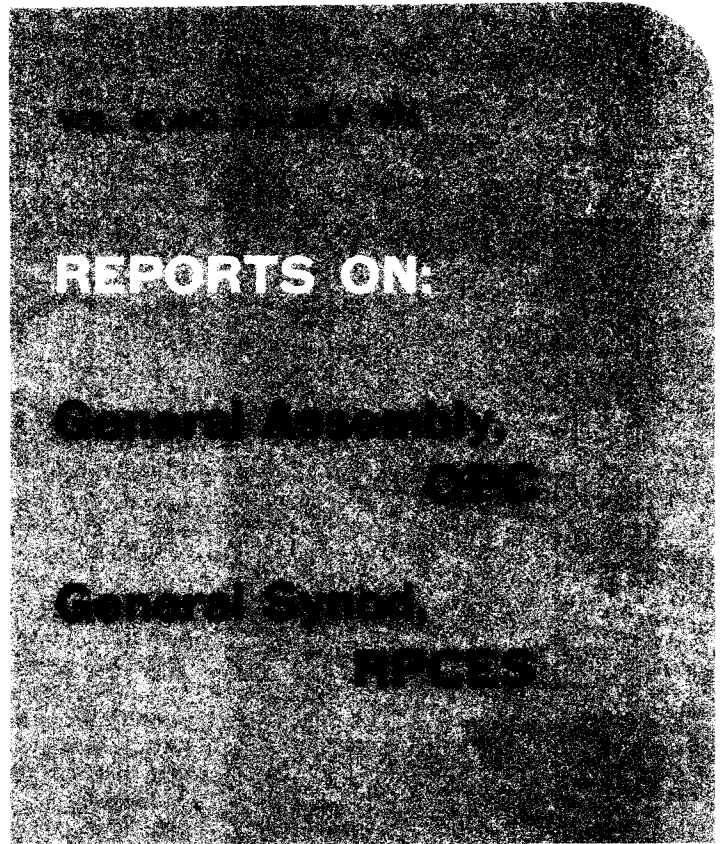


# The Presbyterian Guardian



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## New churches in the OPC

Since the first of the year, several new groups have become affiliated with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The first to be received was the Westminster Presbyterian Church (formerly a Bible Presbyterian congregation) of Succasunna, New Jersey. Its address: 126 S. Hillside Ave., Succasunna, NJ 07876.

More recently a group of believers in Missoula, Montana has made application to be received as a congregation under the leadership of the Rev. Harold S. Kallam (who had earlier helped establish the OP mission in Ronan). Contact: Mr. Glenn S. Junkert, 2828 S. 7th St. W., Missoula, MT 59801.

Then in the far northern part of Maine, a new congregation has been organized as the Emmanuel OPC of Aroostook Valley, serving Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, and Caribou, Maine. Their pastor is the Rev. Charles S. Stanton, R.D. 1, Fort Fairfield, ME 04742.

Not too far south of that in the Burlington area of Vermont, another group is petitioning to be organized. This would be the first OPC in the state of Vermont. Contact: the Rev. Ray Commeret, Box 156, East Barre, VT 05649.

And regular worship services have been started in Lubbock, Texas under the ministry of home missionary Glenn T. Black. This group hopes to have its own building soon. Meanwhile, for information relative to the services, contact: Mike Mahon, 2511 63rd St., Lubbock, TX 79413.

Planning is underway also to begin a new church in the new planned city of Columbia, Maryland, which has no Reformed church witness as yet. Supervising this new work is Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Burtonsville. For information contact: Rev. Barry R. Hofford, 15627 Bond Mill Rd., Laurel, MD 20810.

## Conn and Sproul receive degrees at Geneva

On May 4 at the 127th commencement of Geneva College, Harvie M. Conn, Associate Professor of Missions and Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, was honored with the degree of Doctor of Letters, in recognition of his missionary and teaching ministry. Professor Conn, a minister of the Orthodox

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Presbyterian Church, had delivered the baccalaureate sermon last year.

On the same day, Dr. Robert C. Sproul, Resident Theologian at the Ligonier Study Center in Stahlstown, Pa., was also honored with the degree of Doctor of Letters, in recognition of his record as a teacher and author. Dr. Sproul, a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America, was this year's baccalaureate speaker.

## Dakotas Ministers' Retreat

The annual ministers' retreat of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is scheduled for September 7-9, 1976. It will be held again this year at the Homeward Trail Bible Camp in Mason City, Nebraska. The studies this year will be a "Seminar on Christian Education" led by staff members of the denomination's Committee on Christian Education. Registration is \$13.00 (if received before August 30), sent to the Rev. Jack J. Peterson, Box 306, Carson, ND 58529.

## NEW ADDRESSES

Rev. Donald K. Clements (PCA), from Savannah, Ga., to the U. S. Navy chaplaincy, at 351 Spruce St., Chula Vista, CA 92011.

Dr. Elmer M. Dortzbach (OPC) from Thornton, Col., to teaching post; c/o Barrington College, Barrington, RI 02806.

Rev. Robert G. Sanderson (RPCES) from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to 101-2 Villas Dr., New Castle, DE 19720.

Rev. Daniel H. Overduin (OPC) from Los Angeles to 12515 Renville St., Lakewood, CA 90715.

Rev. Richard Aeschliman (RPCES), from Elgin, Ill., to 228 Chase Road, Columbus, OH 43214.

Rev. Dennis E. Johnson (OPC), from Fairlawn, N. J., to 112 N. Roscommon Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90022.

Rev. David R. Hopkins (RPCES), from New Castle, Pa., to 320 11th Street S., Brigantine, NJ 08203.

# The 154th GENERAL SYNOD of the R. P. C. E. S.

*This report was prepared by the Rev. Robert A. Case, II, pastor of the Hope Presbyterian Church (RPCES) in Phoenix, Arizona.*

The 154th General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, met in the shadow of Pike's Peak, Colorado, to deliberate and to dedicate its ministry for the beginning of the third century of its American existence.

Plenary sessions were held at Glen Eyrie, the international headquarters of the Navigators. The synod convened on Friday evening, May 21, 1976, at Village Seven Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs. The service of worship and communion was led by the Rev. Paul Alexander of Huntsville, Alabama, Moderator of the 153rd General Synod.

In the business session that followed, the synod elected the Rev. Robert Auffarth of Newark, Delaware, as its new Moderator.

## Overtures

On Saturday morning, the synod reconvened at 8 a.m. for worship through praise and at 8:15 for worship through service. Ten overtures (communications requesting some kind of synod action)

Dr. Wilber Wallis leading a seminar studying report on the Holy Spirit at 154th General Synod, RPCES.

were received from various presbyteries.

An overture from the Southwest Presbytery urged Synod not to approve the ordaining of women to any office—minister, elder, or deacon. Since a report from the Study Committee on the Role of Women in the Church was due, this overture was received as information only.

An overture from the California Presbytery asked that Synod's Committee on Hospitalization not publish the names of those insured and the amounts paid by the plan. After a floor discussion with Dr. Franklin S. Dyrness, administrator of the plan, the Synod asked that a possible revision of current practice be studied.

From the Midwest Presbytery an overture asked Synod to admonish Dr. Arthur F. Glasser, Professor of Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary, for (among other things) his participation in the 1972 World Council of Churches' missions conference in Bangkok. Synod ruled this overture out of order, and several commissioners expressed the belief that the Midwest Presbytery might better be admonished for a public display of unproven allegations against a brother.

Another overture from the Midwest

## Cover pictures:

Moderator Robert Auffarth (l.) with Past Moderator, Paul Alexander.

Official photograph of the 43rd General Assembly, OPC.

Presbytery asked for a definition of the call of a pastor. The Form of Government Committee, having received this overture, later returned with a three-page "temporary" definition that was basically approved by the synod.

From the Southern Presbytery came an overture asking Synod to study the use of beverage alcohol and ways to deal with the abuse of alcohol in R. P. churches. A study committee of five was authorized. It is perhaps a sign of maturity within the Reformed Presbyterian Church that Synod instructed its moderator to form a "balanced" committee composed of men who differed on the question of a Christian's use of alcohol.

The New Jersey Presbytery overtured Synod asking for clarification of the status of elders in mission churches; Synod took no action on this. The Southern Presbytery asked Synod to change the Form of Government concerning the status of members and elders of mission churches. Synod approved this overture and sent it down to the presbyteries for action.

*(Continued on page 10)*

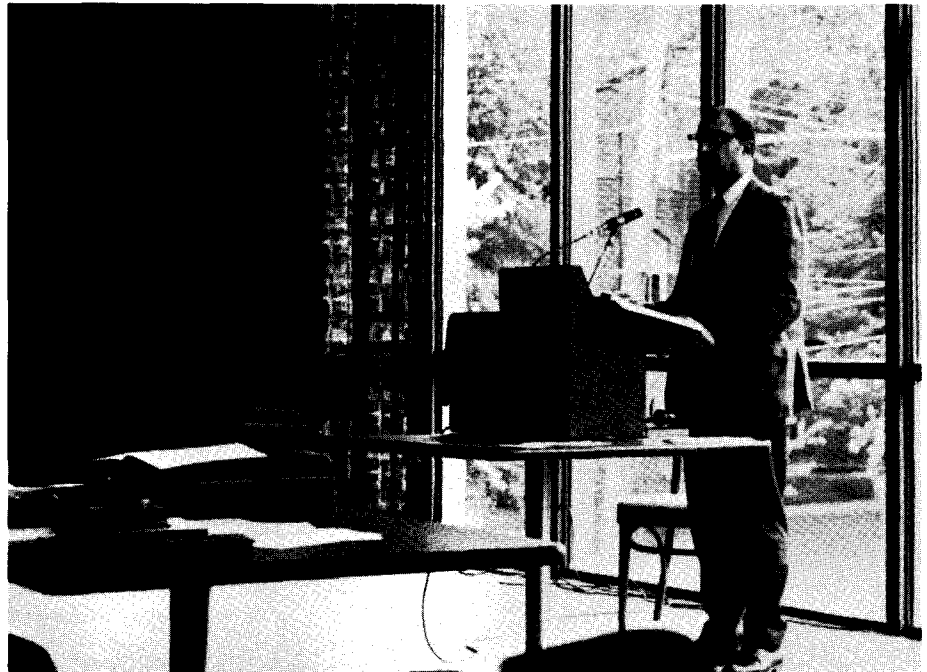


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# The Forty-third GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the O.P.C.

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*This report was prepared by the editor who was a commissioner of the Presbytery of Philadelphia to the Forty-third General Assembly.*



**Garret A. Hoogerhyde, Moderator**

The Forty-third General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church convened at 8 p.m. on Thursday, May 27, 1976 at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. It convened just fifteen days short of the fortieth anniversary of the denomination. (This would normally have been the forty-first such assembly, but two extra ones were held in the early years of the church.)

The assembly was convened for a worship service led by the Rev. George R. Cottenden, moderator of the 42nd General Assembly. On Friday morning it reconvened for its business sessions, and proceeded to work on one of the longest dockets ever.

After having reelected ruling elder Richard A. Barker as Stated Clerk and ruling elder Rodney T. Jones as Statistician, the assembly promptly elected ruling elder Garret A. Hoogerhyde as Moderator. Mr. Hoogerhyde already serves the church as a member of the Committee on Home Missions and as president of the Committee on Pensions. He is an elder of Grace Church in Fairlawn, New Jersey.

With the preliminaries out of the way and a docket adopted, the assembly then

recessed in order to allow various advisory committees to meet. These committees, chosen by the Stated Clerk in consultation with the previous Moderator, are assigned the various items of business before the assembly for their review and recommendation. The system of advisory committees, largely adopted from the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, appears to serve the assembly well. It guarantees that every report will receive careful attention before going into the final records.

### **The "Kress case"**

Though not the first major business before the assembly, certainly the most significant and time-consuming (three whole days and two evening sessions!) was the judicial case originating in the Presbytery of Ohio against the Rev. Arnold S. Kress.

The case was of interest partly because it was the first time in the forty-year history of the denomination that a judicial case had ever come before a General Assembly. Other doctrinal problems had arisen in the past, but these

were dealt with—if at all—by complaints against lower courts or by referring the whole thing to a study committee. In this case, a presbytery had drawn up formal charges of doctrinal error against a member, and both the presbytery and Mr. Kress had "gone the whole route" in seeking a judicial answer to the doctrinal questions.

More important perhaps than such historical precedents was the doctrinal issue itself. Though the modern "charismatic movement" has swirled across many churches in recent years—and often left widespread wreckage behind—it had so far left the Orthodox Presbyterian Church largely untouched. Mr. Kress, though, had sought out the experience of "speaking in tongues" while a missionary in Japan.

Having been brought home by the Committee on Foreign Missions and given a special furlough to study the biblical teaching on the subject, Mr. Kress had produced several papers on various aspects of it. These documents then became the basis for the doctrinal charges brought against him by his pres-

bytery.

### The narrow issues

Though originally charged with three related errors in doctrine (and a fourth charge on a different subject), Mr. Kress was found guilty by the Presbytery of Ohio on only one (and on the fourth separate charge). The verdict was reached on a charge that Mr. Kress had "asserted that the gifts of prophecy and tongues may continue in the church today." This, the presbytery went on to charge, was "contrary to the Word of God which teaches:

"(1) Tongues were for a sign of judgment against unbelieving Israel [1 Cor. 14:21, 22 and Isaiah 28:11, 12];

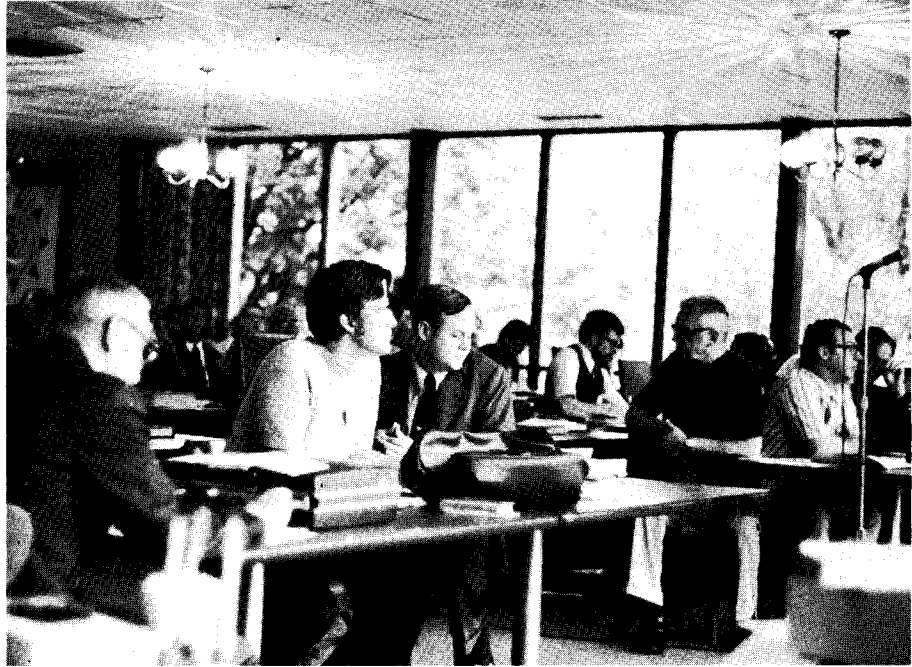
"(2) Both tongues and prophecy were for the giving of word-revelation in the apostolic church [1 Cor. 14:26-33; Eph. 2:20];

"(3) Even private speaking in tongues is speaking in mysteries, i.e., word-revelation [1 Cor. 14:2; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:3-6, 9, 10];

"(4) The gifts of prophecy and tongues were concomitant with the gift of the apostles [Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Cor. 12:12 with 1 Cor. 12-14]."

It should be pointed out that Mr. Kress consistently had rejected the "second blessing" theology of many modern "charismatics." He has also insisted that, whatever the exact form of prophecy and tongues that may be found today, it can in no sense be understood as normative, infallible revelation of the kind that was incorporated in the Scriptures. And though he had strongly felt that there were gifts of prophecy and tongues today, the most he ever claimed from Scripture was that a possible continuation of these gifts was allowed for.

In other words, the view of Mr. Kress that became the subject of judicial charges and finally reached the General Assembly was a very restricted position. Even so, though it required two separate trial sessions, the Presbytery of Ohio had found Mr. Kress guilty of error as charged. Against this verdict, and against a verdict of guilty on the other unrelated charge, Mr. Kress had appealed to the General Assembly citing various specifications of error both in the verdicts and in



Rev. Arnold S. Kress with Professor John M. Frame during judicial case.

presbytery's conduct of the case.

### An appellate court

Never having had a judicial case before, and finding little help in the Book of Discipline, the Assembly had to determine for itself how to operate as an appellate court of the church. It adopted a scheduled presentation of the case from both the appellant and representatives of the presbytery.

In this presentation, lasting a total of three hours, the issues of the case were set forth. Then followed a second three-hour period in which the commissioners were allowed to ask questions aimed at clarifying the case. This procedure did not really accomplish its goal. Instead, the tendency was to inquire into the whole background of Mr. Kress's experiences and views. Perhaps this was necessary, but it went far beyond the specifics of the actual appeal before the assembly.

Even after getting down to the specifications of error set forth in Mr. Kress's appeal, the assembly had difficulty in coming to a decision. Why individual commissioners voted as they did is im-

possible to determine, or which arguments were most persuasive or what concerns motivated those voting.

### Settling the case

The crucial vote, to deny Mr. Kress's appeal and to uphold the judgment of the Presbytery of Ohio, found 72 commissioners voting to deny the appeal and 39 voting against the denial.

Some comment on this vote seems called for, but it can only be the opinions of one observer. That so large a number were unwilling to uphold the presbytery's guilty verdict seems to have been due to the conviction that the presbytery had failed to make a clear case from Scripture against Mr. Kress's views. No member of the assembly expressed agreement with Mr. Kress's position. But many did feel that, in the absence of a "good and necessary" case against his views, it was wrong to find him guilty.

On the other hand, a large majority was convinced that a sufficient case had been made. The original charge lists four biblical teachings that, in the minds of many, were sufficient to rule out Mr.



Tense moment.

Kress's idea of a possibly continuing gift of prophecy and tongues. (Mr. Kress did not reject these four points, but insisted that they did not preclude his position.)

Others who voted to deny the appeal did so even though they felt that a conclusive case against Mr. Kress's view had not actually been made. They were persuaded instead that it was indeed "contrary to the Word of God" to hold a view that in itself had no conclusive proof from Scripture. In other words, Mr. Kress was judged to be in error for advocating a position that he himself had not clearly demonstrated from Scripture, in error for adding to Scripture what he could not establish by "good and necessary inference."

Despite the long hours spent in considering this part of the judicial charges against Mr. Kress, and in spite of some strong disagreement over the final vote, the General Assembly did deny Mr. Kress's appeal and did uphold the verdict of the Presbytery of Ohio. (Presbytery representatives had already indicated their intention to do no more at present than admonish Mr. Kress concerning his views. At a later point, the assembly itself passed—without audible dissent—a resolution urging Mr. Kress to accept the decisions of his brethren and further expressing its judgment that his ministerial gifts were of value to the church

despite the adverse judicial decisions.)

#### The significance of the case

(What follows is adapted from remarks made before the assembly by a commissioner immediately following the vote to deny the appeal.)

"All synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both" (*Confession of Faith*, XXXI, 3).

What happened in that vote was that the highest court of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church had spoken on the particular issue before it. Until Judgment Day, there is no higher court to which the question may be taken. Even so, all the assembly did was rule in regard to a particular case having to do with the particular views of one man.

In no sense is this decision an addition to the confessional standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Neither does it establish some new test of orthodoxy for the ministry of that church. At most the General Assembly has set a precedent that may be useful to other church courts dealing with similar matters. And even then only a precedent has been established.

Whatever else the case may have de-

termined, it did make clear that in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church it is not sufficient for finding a man guilty of error to prove that his views are contrary to the commonly held opinions in the church. Nor is it sufficient even to prove that the supposed error is contrary to the Confession of Faith or Catechisms. The only error with which one may be charged is one that can be shown to be contrary to the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the Word of God itself.

Though many commissioners may have felt that just such a proof of error in doctrine contrary to the Word of God was not conclusively demonstrated, yet the assembly by a large majority did judge that such an error had been shown. That decision must now be weighed seriously and prayerfully by Mr. Kress himself and it should "be used as a help by others."

#### The other charge

In another charge, Mr. Kress had been found guilty of asserting that "the church ought not necessarily to exclude from the office of the ministry of the Word those who, although true believers, hold serious doctrinal errors such as Arminianism, or the denial of infant baptism, . . . contrary to Scripture which teaches that only those should be made Elders in the church who 'hold to the faithful word which is according to the teaching (of the apostles)' (Titus 1:9)."

Though taking less than half the time required for the first appeal, the assembly spent several hours considering Mr. Kress's appeal against a verdict of guilty on this charge. At no point was there any disagreement about whether Mr. Kress had actually made statements like those alleged against him in the charge. There was some debate about what his words actually meant, but most of the discussion centered over whether such views constituted an offense in doctrine.

When the crucial vote was taken, the assembly voted with only two audible dissenting votes that the charge against Mr. Kress with its specifications of evidence would, if proved, show the com-

## Lunchtime

mission of an offense in doctrine contrary to the Word of God. After this it only remained to answer the particular points in Mr. Kress's appeal in order. Finally, the appeal itself was denied and the verdict of guilty by the Presbytery of Ohio was upheld in this case also.

### The purpose of discipline

Perhaps the major importance of this long judicial process was that the church was able to conclude such a case at all. One distinctive feature of Presbyterian church order has been its carefully spelled out system for trial of those charged with error in doctrine or practice.

Yet the process is formidable, frequently technical in its legal safeguards, and requires something like an "ecclesiastical lawyer" to keep track of things. All those technicalities are intended to protect the rights of individuals and of the truth of God also.

Even so, the process was originally designed "to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of his church and to reclaim the offender." And that last purpose is not the least by any means.

In this case the honor of Christ was involved in the attempt to understand rightly the truths set forth in his Word. The purity of the church was involved in the very fact that a difference of doctrinal viewpoint existed and needed to be resolved. And the defendant himself was certainly involved, since his whole future ministry in this particular church was at stake.

Those who sat and listened and finally voted on these matters did so with all these concerns in mind. Certainly they did so with great loving concern for Arnold Kress himself. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has sometimes been seen as unloving in its pursuit of orthodoxy in doctrine and practice. And though there were strong tensions felt, the overall effect of this judicial process was a demonstration that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church could deal with a man's doctrinal views and do so with evident love for the man himself.



If for no other reason, this judicial case is important. It sets a good precedent for taking on the burdensome chore of using formal judicial process in dealing with significant doctrinal issues. Both Mr. Kress and the Presbytery of Ohio, and then the General Assembly itself, are to be commended for allowing the church's constitutional procedures to have their place in resolving such a question.

### The work of the church

There were times when a visitor might suppose that the General Assembly had nothing to do but deal with judicial cases. But despite the pressures caused by the amount of time devoted to the judicial matters, the General Assembly did deal with the basic work of the church before it.

**Foreign Missions.** The first report to be heard was that of the Committee on Foreign Missions. Highlights in that report include the work of the Rev. Benson Male, first in Lebanon, now in Egypt, where an exciting opportunity of service to Egyptian believers and others outside that country calls for continued help.

The other mission fields report both the need for further reinforcement and encouragements in the work. In Japan,

especially with the absence of Mr. Kress, there is urgent need for new missionary additions. From Taiwan, the Richard B. Gaffins are coming home to retirement; it is hoped that the Rev. and Mrs. Robert L. Marshall of Bridgeton, N. J., may be able to answer the call to this field soon. From Korea, the Bruce F. Hunts have already left for their retirement; the Rev. Donald Ritsman was sent out earlier this year. As reported earlier, the Eritrea mission has been forced to leave that field because of the fighting there and it is still uncertain what future plans can be made.

Of particular interest is the amount of cooperative work now being done through this committee. Both the Reformed Church, U. S. (Eureka Classis) and the Reformed Churches in New Zealand and Australia have used the O.P.C.'s existing committee to forward their own foreign mission concerns. In addition, an organization in the Netherlands was particularly involved in the Eritrean mission and desires to continue its support elsewhere. Some concern over the amount of "outside money" was expressed at the assembly, but generally this pattern of cooperation was approved.

**Christian Education.** This committee's report focused on the major change recently made when it joined with the cor-



Five commissioners who had been present at the First Assembly, June 11, 1936. Front (l. to r.), Leslie A. Dunn, Bruce A. Coie, David Freeman, and rear, Robert L. Atwell, Calvin K. Cummings.

responding committee of the Presbyterian Church in America to organize Great Commission Publications, Inc. This joint agency is to continue the production of the Sunday school curriculum primarily and such other publishing ventures as may be helpful to the two denominations.

Having committed the bulk of its existing publications program to the new joint agency, the Committee on Christian Education now must determine what its future role shall be. There continue to be special publication needs for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church which the committee should seek to provide.

It was pointed out that the new joint venture does not eliminate or even relieve the church's responsibility to continue its financial support of the work of Christian education through its committee. The joint venture depends on the continuing support now of both denominations and that support is needed in full if the publication of a full Sunday school curriculum is to be maintained and completed. What has happened is a sharing of the financial burden by two denominations; but both must do their share in carrying the load.

**Home Missions.** The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension sought approval of the General Assembly for an expanded level of support and outreach. This committee particularly was hampered by deficits in its approved budget as contributions dropped severely

in 1974's recession. Though gifts improved significantly in 1975, the committee still had a deficit at the beginning of 1976.

This committee's report urged that the "work of the whole church should advance," both at home and abroad and through the printed page. It pointed out that a more vigorous and enlarged home missionary program was basic to the church's overall obedience to the Great Commission.

Part of its goal of enlarging the denomination's home missionary effort is through the use of the "missionary-at-large," four of whom are now serving as presbytery church-planting evangelists. The committee also hopes to have one man available in the future for shorter term, intensive church-planting work as needed.

The committee continues to provide loans to churches for the purchase of land and building construction. These loans are often the means whereby a congregation may obtain suitable space for worship or housing for its pastor. The management of these loans and mortgages is a major part of the committee's work in addition to its direct support of home mission efforts.

#### The Combined Budget

Of major importance for each assembly is the adoption of a Combined Budget for the work of the Committees on Home and Foreign Missions and Christian

Education. The Committee on Stewardship is responsible for reviewing the requested budgets of each committee and for assessing the probable support to be expected from the churches in the calendar year ahead.

The Committee on Stewardship, since its reorganization in 1972, has gained a more ready acceptance of its recommendations at the General Assembly. Though an attempt was made to modify the recommended Combined Budget, it was passed as presented to this assembly. The 1977 Combined Budget was approved as follows:

Christian Education	\$174,000
Foreign Missions	262,000
Home Missions	228,000
	<hr/>
1977 Combined Budget	\$664,000

The budget as approved represents an 8% increase over the 1976 Combined Budget of \$615,000. It also includes a small but definite increase in the proportion of the total committed to the work of home missions, reflecting the judgment that this part of the church's total ministry of outreach needed to be strengthened. Approval of this Combined Budget is in effect a commitment on the part of the assembly to provide the support indicated.

#### Form of Government

It was expected that this General Assembly would take up the proposed new Form of Government, the fruit of many years' labor by the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government. An "Amended Version" was presented by the committee for possible approval and submission to the presbyteries.

At least one major feature in the proposed new Form had stirred more than a little opposition. The committee's "Amended Version" included a provision for requiring ruling elders to go through



Fumi and George Uomoto, during a lunch recess.

a rather complicated procedure of probation that involved term ordination among other things. This whole procedure was opposed by at least one presbytery and others who had communicated with the committee concerning the matter.

The General Assembly's advisory committee that reviewed the "Amended Version" did side with the objections to the provision for ruling elder probation. In its recommendations to the assembly, this review committee proposed that an alternate and more traditional approach be adopted instead. But except for this one area, the advisory committee strongly recommended that the new Form of Government be approved.

But when the time came to consider this matter, it was judged that so much time had been used in the judicial cases that this important subject should be postponed until next year's assembly. It was agreed to give it a priority place on next year's docket, and that a revised version of the committee's proposal would be distributed in September 1976.

#### Other church business

**Diaconal Ministries.** Though not included in the Combined Budget, since much of its support comes from separate offerings through local church deacons, the work of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries is a major part of the church's activity. Discussion of this committee's report was both general and focused on particular elements.

In actions regarding this committee, the assembly determined to ask \$3.50 per communicant member for the committee's work, rather than the \$3.25 proposed by the committee itself. Concern was expressed that the needs of retired ministers should be more fully met through the committee's ministry.

**G. A. Travel Fund and Budget Fund.** For the first time in memory, the Travel Fund was sufficient to reimburse commissioners for their total travel expenses and even to "reward" those drivers who



saved the assembly money by bringing passengers with them. This fund has a good balance, and leaves the assembly free in the future to meet where travel expenses would be more than normal.

The Budget Fund is a catch-all fund that meets the expenses of the assembly's various committees not otherwise funded. For the first time also, the Budget Fund reported a positive balance, though this amount was expected to be used in paying the costs of delegates to the forthcoming Reformed Ecumenical Synod meeting in South Africa this summer.

If churches continue to pay their requested per capita contributions as in the past year, both these funds should be able to do their proper jobs.

**Pensions.** After suffering a serious loss in its investments as the general economy declined, the Committee on Pensions was able to report a greatly improved picture this year. The committee also indicated ways in which ministers might use the pension plan to provide housing on retirement.

**Fraternal Delegates.** The assembly was addressed by the following fraternal delegates: For the Presbyterian Church in America, the Rev. Timothy Fortner; Ruling Elder Charles E. LeSuer was also present for the PCA, as was Dr. G. Aiken Taylor as an alternate. For the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Rev. John H. White, with the Rev.

Dean R. Smith as alternate. For the Christian Reformed Church, the Rev. Raymond Opperwall and Elder Albert A. Bel. For the Free Church of Scotland, the Rev. Hugh M. Cartwright. For the Reformed Church in the U.S. (Eureka Classis), the Rev. Paul H. Treick. For the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, the Rev. Charles B. Holliday.

**Fraternal Relations.** This area of concern took very little time this year with no major matters being reported. A letter from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, reported the action of their synod instructing the Fraternal Relations Committee to work toward a new plan of union with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for presentation as soon as possible. This communication was referred to the O.P.C. Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations for its consideration.

**The 44th General Assembly.** To the surprise of most present, the recommendation of the Committee on Date, Place, and Travel concerning next year's assembly was readily adopted. The assembly is called to convene at 8 p.m. on June 2, 1977 at Bethel O. P. Church in Oostburg, Wisconsin.

The Forty-third General Assembly, after the longest session in recent times, was dissolved at 2:24 p.m. on Friday, June 4, 1976.

# General Synod, RPCES

(Continued from page 3)

## Toward merger with the OPC

Another overture from the Southern Presbytery asked Synod to present the current Plan of Union with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (which was not approved at last year's concurrent meetings of the OPC Assembly and RPC Synod) to the 155th (1977) General Synod of the RPCES for vote, as well as urging the OPC Assembly to take concurrent action.

In response, Synod passed the following resolution: "We recommend in accordance with last year's Synod action that the Fraternal Relations Committee be instructed to continue discussions with the O.P.C. Committee on Ecumenicity with a view towards the possibility of eventual union. As soon as possible, the committee is to present a finalized Plan of Union to the Synod, and Synod will vote on it one year after its presentation if approved for vote."

In short, the earliest a possible vote on merger might take place would be the 156th General Synod in 1978.

An overture from the Rocky Mountain Presbytery concerning the status of a minister in his presbytery was referred to the Form of Government Committee for study. The Pittsburgh Presbytery overtured Synod to add two statements to the 153rd (1975) General Synod report on the "Amsterdam Philosophy" regarding the word of God and Scripture, and the kingdom of God and the church; Synod rejected this as not being "helpful" to the discussion of the issue.

## Agency Reports

A set of teeth was added to Synod's various boards as it approved a recommendation of the Administrative Committee that members of agency boards who have not attended three successive board meetings be dropped unless retained by board action.

**Covenant College.** Dr. Richard Chewning, a professor of economics and clerk of session of the Stony Point Church in Richmond, Virginia, was presented to

Synod as Covenant College's newly elected chairman of the board. Dr. Chewning reported that Covenant was moving into its third historic phase and that a new era of administration was now beginning.

Dr. Luder G. Whitlock, Jr., a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America and a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, was elected to the board. Also elected was Mr. Earl Whitmer, ruling elder in Christ Church of Grand Rapids and newly appointed Executive Director of Synod's National Board of Home Ministries, and the Rev. Mark E. Pett, pastor of Liberty Church in Randallstown, Maryland.

**National Presbyterian Missions.** After recessing over the Lord's Day, Synod resumed business on Monday morning as it heard the report of its home missions agency. Both the Rev. Paul Taylor, chairman of the Board of N.P.M., and the Rev. Donald J. MacNair, Executive Director, emphasized that the burden of establishing new churches rests with the presbytery concerned, not with a national agency. N.P.M. will work with, but not in the place of, presbytery in starting new churches.

Three new mission churches were begun this year (up from 10 to 13) with the number of particular congregations increasing by one (to 151). In elections to the Board of N.P.M., it was again evident that Synod was not willing to elect a missions pastor to that board.

**Covenant Theological Seminary.** Dr. Robert G. Rayburn, President of the seminary, gave a moving personal testimony to God's grace in his complete healing from a recent cancer. Dr. Rayburn is retiring next year and will be succeeded by Dr. William S. Barker, present Dean of the Faculty. Dr. Barker is the first graduate of the seminary to become a faculty member.

It was also announced that Dr. John W. Sanderson, Jr., presently on the faculty of Covenant College, would join the seminary faculty this fall as Professor of



(Left to right), Dr. James Hurley, the Rev. Egon Middelmann and the Rev. Paul Alexander.

**Biblical Theology.** Continuing the move toward Reformed ecumenicity, Synod approved a Seminary recommendation that up to three seats on its Board be filled with men either from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church or the Presbyterian Church in America.

**World Presbyterian Missions.** W.P.M. also was interested in having an O.P. brother on its Board and, during the previous year, had filled a vacancy by electing the Rev. Harvie M. Conn, Professor of Missions and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary. W.P.M. also signed an agreement with the PCA Committee on Mission to the World making it possible for the PCA to recruit and support missionaries to serve under W.P.M.

The church began this synodical year with 71 missionaries; by April 1, 1976, it had only gained two additional candidates. That, as it turned out, was also the growth percentage of the denomination, but it nevertheless caused concern

to the Rev. Nelson Malkus, Executive Director of W.P.M. On the other hand, for the second consecutive year, W.P.M. received over a million dollars and as a pioneering venture has begun to raise funds for an \$85,000 hospital facility in Ras al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates.

The Rev. David M. Linden, recent graduate of Covenant Seminary and pastor of the Hazelwood (Missouri) R. P. Church, was elected to the Board of W.P.M., with Synod recognizing that some of its younger members have much to offer. Meanwhile, Dr. Frank Dyrness, a long-time Board member, refused to stand for reelection in order that a younger man might contribute to the church's foreign mission policy.

**Board of Home Missions/Ministries.** In the past, the Board of Home Missions has had a hard time justifying its existence and defending its role before Synod. Partly this was due to a lack of agency competency, partly to a lack of clear marching orders from Synod, and partly because of its low "profile" from its origins in the pre-merger R. P. Church, General Synod.

In any case, this agency had been given new direction last year with the Rev. Frank P. Crane, pastor of the Westminster Church in Muncie, Indiana, elected as Board Chairman. Several younger men were added to the board at that time, giving B.H.M. a new vitality. This year the Board came with a proposed new set of by-laws (which were provisionally adopted).

The Board also introduced its new Executive Director, Mr. Earl Whitmer, a securities investor and elder of Christ Church in Grand Rapids. Finally, as if symbolizing the new wind in its sails, the agency changed its name to the Board of Home Ministries, reflecting its broad concern "to demonstrate the love of God to a dying world."

#### Service Committees

**Fraternal Relations Committee.** This committee had held center stage last year as the OP-RP merger plan was presented. This year its report was understandably shorter and less controversial. The committee informed Synod that it was continuing close fraternal relationships with the OPC and PCA.

In addition, fraternal delegates were appointed to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The committee also reported its success in having the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) doctrinal statement strengthened by addition of the phrase "without error in all its parts" to the first paragraph of the "Basis" section.

Fraternal delegates to the 154th General Synod included James Bosgraf (OPC) of Denver, Paul McCracken (RPCNA) also of Denver, Stanley Mast (CRC) of Colorado Springs, and Wayne Buchtel (PCA) of Los Alamos, N. M.

**The Magazine Committee.** The other service committee to occupy substantial attention as this particular synod was the Magazine Committee, charged with the responsibility for overseeing a regular journalistic ministry to the denomination. Once again the committee was under fire for not fulfilling its mandate. The denominational periodical (*Mandate*) appeared only six times last year (and some of those issues never got fully distributed) instead of seventeen promised appearances.

In light of this performance, the committee sensed a lack of denominational

support and loss of credibility, and so began to explore the idea of using an independent Reformed periodical (such as *The Presbyterian Guardian* or *The Presbyterian Journal*) to minister to the RPCEs. Synod approved exploratory talks with the *Journal*, while simultaneously approving formation of a select committee to restudy completely the feasibility of a denominational magazine. Chairman of the select committee is the Rev. William Shell, editor-in-chief of NavPress, the publishing agency of the Navigators.

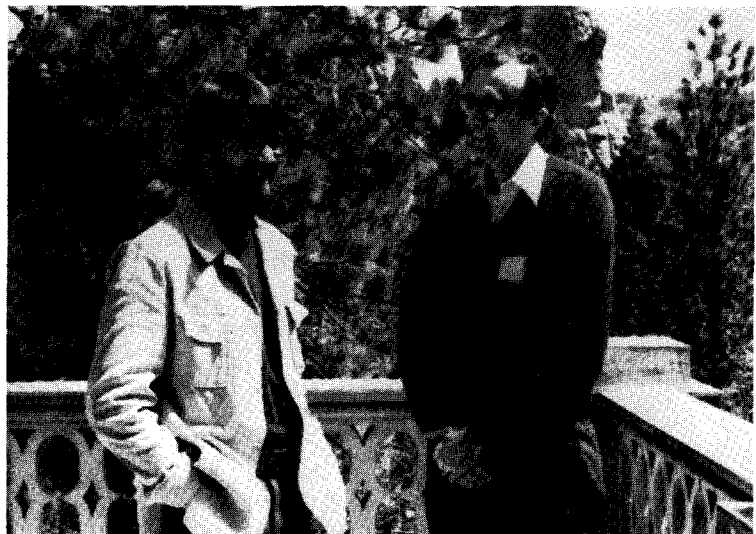
The Magazine Committee was also given approval to investigate the possibilities of publishing and distributing selected study reports approved by the Synod. Meanwhile, *Mandate* is being published as funds permit.

**Chaplain's Committee.** This committee called attention to the hymn, "It Was on a Friday Morning," in the latest edition of the *Book of Worship for the United States Forces*. Clearly blasphemous, this hymn was apparently approved by the Armed Forces Chaplains' Board. Synod unanimously approved sending a strongly worded objection to the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

#### Special Committees

**Functions of the Deacons.** The study

Dr. William Barker (l.) talking with Dr. Richard Chewning.



committee on this subject brought in a report that caused little disagreement, though much time was spent in haggling over details to help clarify the report. The one substantial issue in the report, that favoring the ordination of women as deacons, was postponed until after the report on the role of women in the church was discussed.

One ex-moderator thought the time spent discussing this report was a waste. But if God has given us instructions, principles, and examples from which to form the manifestation of his church on earth, then such discussions — though time-consuming—are vital for the advancement of God's kingdom.

**Role of Women in the Church.** This report, by all accounts, was the major one at the 154th General Synod. Including forty-nine pages and extensive exegesis (by Dr. James Hurley of Covenant College), the report stressed that there was but one *authoritative* church office, that of the elder. While women are clearly excluded from that one authoritative office, the report contended, they are not to be excluded from the non-authoritative office of deacon.

The report stated: "A central principle regarding the role of women within the church is that with respect to ecclesiastical authority, there are but two groups within the church — elders and non-elders." Further, male non-elders and female non-elders are equal in authority in the church.

While much of the committee's report was adopted, the central issue of the ordination of women as deacons, and the accrual to them of all the rights and responsibilities of that ordination, was sent back to a reconstituted committee for further study. At one point, Moderator Auffarth described the 154th General Synod as "the Synod that recommits" — and to supporters of the women's role report this seemed to be a case in point. The committee was instructed to send a bibliography and additional materials to the presbyteries by December 31, 1976.

**Work of the Holy Spirit.** The report of this study committee was very short (one and a half pages), but was notable in signalling a shift away from the view of Warfield that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (as tongues, healings, prophecies, etc.) ceased with the end of the apostolic age. The report, based on three earlier lengthy reports, concluded that the canon of Scripture is closed, that speaking in tongues is not to be sought

as an attestation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that speaking in tongues is not to be encouraged or lauded, and that those who have had special experiences with God should guard against the divisiveness of making their private experience with God normative for all believers. While much was left unsaid and unexegeted, most commissioners believed that the RPCES needed to say something now about the activity of the Holy Spirit as it is currently being interpreted and experienced. They believed that the most useful course under the circumstances was to agree on what they could agree on and not attempt any further clarifying consensus.

**Ecclesiastical Separation.** Nineteen full pages of material came in the report of this study committee. The report, adopted with a few minor changes, stressed the denomination's need for a separatist identity without being hostile or arbitrary in that identity. As the Rev. Paul Alexander put it, "We have finally realized that we are a branch of the Christian church, not the trunk."

Indeed, in one key sentence (touching on the Glasser-WCC matter) the report reads: "The elder must differentiate between attending meetings (e.g., W.C.C. meetings) as an observer on the one hand and as a subscribing participant on the other." To attend such meetings as something less than a "subscribing participant" was approved by Synod's actions.

### Conclusion

Several things distinguished this from previous synods. The reorganization of business permitted the commissioners much more time to discuss the study reports than ever before allowed. The giving over of Saturday afternoon to report seminars was the idea of Dr. Paul Gilchrist, Synod's Stated Clerk.

Also the bicentennial theme in the worship periods highlighted the contributions of three great Presbyterian pastor-teachers during the Revolutionary era (Witherspoon, Davies, and Edwards). This was helpful in reminding commissioners from whence they came.

Several leading commissioners spoke of the "era of good feeling," of the honesty and openness and relaxation that has apparently come upon the RPCES, as evidenced at this 154th General Synod. The Stated Clerk noted that several votes for cloture were passed without a great ruckus being raised from the floor. One past moderator noted that because the RPCES no longer has either

a single domineering personality nor a narrow crusading spirit, the old tensions and threats are gone.

Perhaps this new era is upon the RPCES because the commissioners recognize that the denomination cannot afford to conduct internecine warfare at Synod. Consider the following: Statistics for 1975 show the RPCES total membership grew only 1.26% (from 23,241 to 23,584). This is ironic in light of last year's pomposity about the RPCES growth and the OPC "deadness."

But perhaps this greater appreciation for each other is due more to the maturing influence of the Holy Spirit on that part of Christ's body known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

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*The Guardian sincerely appreciates the time and effort—and the accompanying photographs—given to this informative report by Mr. Case.*

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### CONTACTS DESIRED

Anyone living in the Syracuse, New York area desiring to join a Bible study group with the prayerful hope of establishing an Orthodox Presbyterian Church, please contact:

Dr. & Mrs. Quinton J. Bianchine  
P. O. Box H  
De Witt, NY 13214  
315-445-1769

or

Rev. Theodore J. Georgian  
65 Hoover Dr.  
Rochester, NY 14615  
716-865-9168

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If you know of people living in or near Missoula, Montana who might like to be a part of our fellowship, please send their names, addresses, telephone numbers and— if possible—their degree of interest to Glen Junckert, 2828 S. 7th Street West, Missoula, MT 59801. All replies greatly appreciated.

### WANTED: Principal-teacher

Beaver County Christian School in New Brighton, Pa., is seeking a principal-teacher for the 1976-77 school year. B.C.C.S. is a K-12 day school under the direction of a board of directors elected by and from an association of parents whose children are in the school.

The position will involve ¼ time administration for this year and ¾ time teaching on the secondary level. Minimum qualifications: (1) bachelor's degree, (2) teaching experience, (3) teaching proficiency in two of the following areas: science, Bible, social studies, and (4) Reformed perspective.

For additional information or to apply, write: D. A. Harvey, 3219 College Ave., Beaver Falls, PA 15010.




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Whatever things are lovely, . . . think on these things  
(Philippians 4:8).

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### Thistleheads

In the thistle-thirsting field,  
Touching, brushing thistle stalk,  
It is so very hard to walk  
Unless one rests his mind instead  
On the fragrant thistlehead.  
Then, like the frequent butterfly,  
Mind and color make reply  
And reach as one the summer sky.

Have you ever walked through a pleasant pasture or a sunny field on a summer's day to find out it was not so pleasant after all? Your legs and arms are scratched by the sharp prickles of thistle leaves and stalks. Suddenly, your pleasant walk has become a battle in which you cannot win. As your discomfort increases, so does your

dislike not only for the poor plants but for everything about the day itself. Nothing will relieve your feelings until you have left the patch of thistles.

Perhaps, though, you are one of those rare persons who, upon glancing at the thistleheads, will have a change of mind. You will suddenly see varying shades of magenta and purple. You will smell a soothing fragrance and hear the gracious hum of bee visitors. You will watch colorful butterflies light upon the thistle crowns. You will become so absorbed in this display that you may even stand a bit longer in the patch to feast upon it.

So, there are many sharp and painful thistles in our walk through life. It is easy to feel them and easy to keep one's mind on the discomforts they cause us. The result is a depression of mind and spirit.

Paul urges us to look instead on what is lovely in life's thistle-filled pasture. In his letter to the Philippians, he gives us the secret of a light spirit, a joyful air, and pleasant Christian walk:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

—Ellen Bryan Obed

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# Genesis 2:22

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## Missionary CLOSET

Juliet W. Griffin

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Neat piles of blouses and sweaters on a long table. The unmistakable scent of mothballs coming from the open doors of a metal cabinet. What's going on here in the church basement?

Nothing unusual: the Missionary Closet is undergoing periodic check. The smiling lady sorting the clothing would be glad to take a few minutes to rest and answer some of the questions that come readily to our minds.

**Q.** First of all, what is a "missionary closet"?

**A.** As its name implies, it is a repository for good, used clothing that can be offered to our missionary families for their personal use, when they come home on furlough.

**Q.** Who is responsible for the clothes collection?



**A.** The Women's Missionary Society sponsors the project. The person in charge of missionary correspondence ascertains who will be coming home on furlough the following year and what sizes of clothing each member of the family will require—and even what styles and colors are preferred. Then the Missionary Closet chairman makes these specifics known to the women of the church well in advance so that appropriate articles of clothing can be set aside (particularly during spring and fall wardrobe change-overs) and brought to the church.

**Q.** What happens to the clothes that are brought in?

**A.** Some items are put into a storage bin; others are hung on the coat rack. The Missionary Closet chairman looks for them each week so that there is no accumulation on the racks. She checks each piece to determine its usefulness; if it's worth keeping, she puts it in the double-door steel cabinet you see here. The doors are kept locked in order that control over its contents can be maintained; for we are interested in quality, rather than quantity, so far as the clothing we retain is concerned. We rarely keep things for more than one year. Even so, we are careful to renew moth preventatives regularly.

**Q.** It sounds as though you receive articles that have to be discarded.

**A.** Unfortunately, we do. It is strange that some people will decide that certain items are too shabby for them to wear, but will pass them along for someone else. We take a dim view of the attitude that relegates our missionaries to second-class citizenship, even though we freely offer them second-hand clothing.

**Q.** What criteria do you use in judging what is to be kept?

**A.** An item must be clean, in wearable condition and in style, to be considered fit for our furlough families. Occasionally we receive garments of superior quality that may be soiled. If we think they are good enough to keep, we will have them dry-cleaned, or we'll run them through our own washing machines to freshen them. One of our senior citizens



doesn't mind sewing on buttons; but we don't go in for extensive repair work. We are flexible enough to recognize a much-used item that still has a great deal of wear in it—such as children's play clothes that may be a bit faded but sturdy. None the less we are a bit ruthless when it comes to tossing out substandard garments; these are given to a local charity.

**Q.** You must have a large committee working on this project.

**A.** On the contrary; the most we have ever had was two. When only a few are involved in the actual decisions of keeping or discarding clothes, the work is done quickly. Committee members need (1) to be convinced of the value of the project, (2) to be willing to put the necessary time into sorting and classifying the collection on a regular basis, and (3) to possess an imagination and style sense.

**Q.** How do you get the clothing to the missionaries?

**A.** We find out from the Committee on Foreign Missions when our missionaries are to land in the United States and where they are to live while on furlough; we also ask if their itineration will bring them into our area. Then we contact the missionaries to let them know what



we have, so they will not hurry out to buy duplicates. We may hold the clothes for personal delivery until there's a missionary conference or presbytery meeting, or we will mail boxes to them. Heavy items, such as men's overcoats, really ought to be tried on before we incur the expense of mailing them, but this cannot always be done.

**Q.** Is there a fund for the Missionary Closet expenses?

**A.** Not as such. Money for dry cleaning and postage comes out of the contingency fund of the Women's Missionary Society treasury.

**Q.** Do you ask that clothing be returned?

**A.** No. More will accumulate.

**Q.** It sounds as though this is a very workable and practical means of helping our missionary program.

**A.** The missionaries themselves have said so. Several have expressed their appreciation over and over again. It is one way of our saying "Thank you" to them for being our faithful and able representatives overseas. However, the giving of our "outgrown-but-not-outworn" clothing does not take the place of providing liberally for their monetary support.

**Q.** Would you object if other churches adopted your idea?

**A.** Not at all; in fact, it would be a help if they did. Our aim is to outfit a family for the kind of life it will lead during the furlough year, one that is very much in the public eye. Sometimes we don't have too much of a selection in a particular size—16 Tall, for example. And there was the year that two families were home with a total of five little boys, all wearing size 8!

**Q.** That was probably the year you kept getting an abundance of girls' dresses.

**A.** How right you are! We found some nearby home missionaries who could use them, though. We don't turn down good clothes, just because they do not fulfill

laundry instructions are helpful too. A tape measure, extra hangers, and a moth cake container are essential in the place set aside for the Missionary Closet.

One more thing: the bulk of correspondence should go through the denominational missions office so that the missionaries will not have to answer the same questions to well-meaning church members all over the country while in the throes of packing to come home. Since they correspond regularly with Philadelphia, they could give size and color preferences to be kept on file for the year prior to their furlough.

**Q.** It's high time we allowed you to get back to your job.

**A.** There isn't much more to be done; we keep on top of the situation frequently, you see. But thank you for letting us tell you about our "Missionary Closet."

*The main thing is to catch the vision of what it will mean to a family to have a complete wardrobe supplied by people who care about them.*

*This "interview" should help others to consider a similar project, or even give a spark of imagination to a different form of Christian service on a personal basis. We would like to hear from other groups about any innovative project that might provide a stimulus to others. Write it down and send it in.*

our current specifications. But we do concentrate on the clothing we hope will fit particular families.

**Q.** Have you further suggestions that might help other churches start a Missionary Closet?

**A.** Well, the main thing is to catch the vision of what it will mean to a family to have a complete and appropriate wardrobe supplied by people who care about them as individuals. Then, the one selected to be in charge of the collection ought to consider each item donated by asking herself, "Would I wear it or want a member of my family to wear it?" It helps if donors get into the habit of pinning to each article size information—particularly in men's and children's clothes which often are unmarked;



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**COMMENCEMENT AT  
WILMINGTON**

Wilmington, Del., June 15 (AP)—The annual commencement ceremony of the University of Delaware was held at the University Center here today.

The ceremony was presided over by President James M. Glavin, who delivered the commencement address. He urged graduates to use their education to serve the community and to work for peace and understanding between nations.

The graduates received their degrees from the University of Delaware, which is one of the oldest and largest universities in the United States. The ceremony was attended by thousands of family members and friends of the graduates.

The graduates will be returning to their homes and workplaces across the country. Many of them will be entering the workforce, while others will continue their education at graduate school.

The University of Delaware is proud to have produced so many successful graduates. The university's commitment to academic excellence and service to the community is a source of pride for all who are affiliated with the university.

