

The Presbyterian Guardian

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Synods and Assemblies

"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

Some 1,200 delegates from five denominations enjoyed this experience of fellowship over a period of ten days in June. The member churches of the National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (NAPARC) met concurrently for their annual synods and general assemblies on the campus of Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Arrangements had been made over a period of two years; it was in 1976 that the Christian Reformed Church first issued the invitation to her sister churches in NAPARC.

The foundations of NAPARC were laid in 1974 when a joint meeting was held in Pittsburgh by the Inter-church Relations Committees of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America and the Presbyterian Church in America. However, this year was the first time all five churches met together in their various assemblies. Business meetings were held separately but joint activities were planned so that the various delegates could enjoy one another's fellowship.

Joint Worship Service

A joint worship service was held on the evening of Monday, June 19. The vast congregation was addressed by Dr. Joel Nederhood, Christian Reformed minister of *The Back to God Hour* radio broadcast. Dr. Nederhood delivered a powerful message from Ephesians 1:21-23. Speaking of "The Christ-filled Church," he stressed both the supreme privilege and the solemn responsibility

entailed in the fact that Christ himself is in the midst of his Church. "The Christ-filled church," declared Nederhood, "must bring the judgement of God to bear upon society." Making a startling comparison between our society and that of Nazi Germany, he called for particular vigilance in the areas of education and abortion.

RPCES Meetings

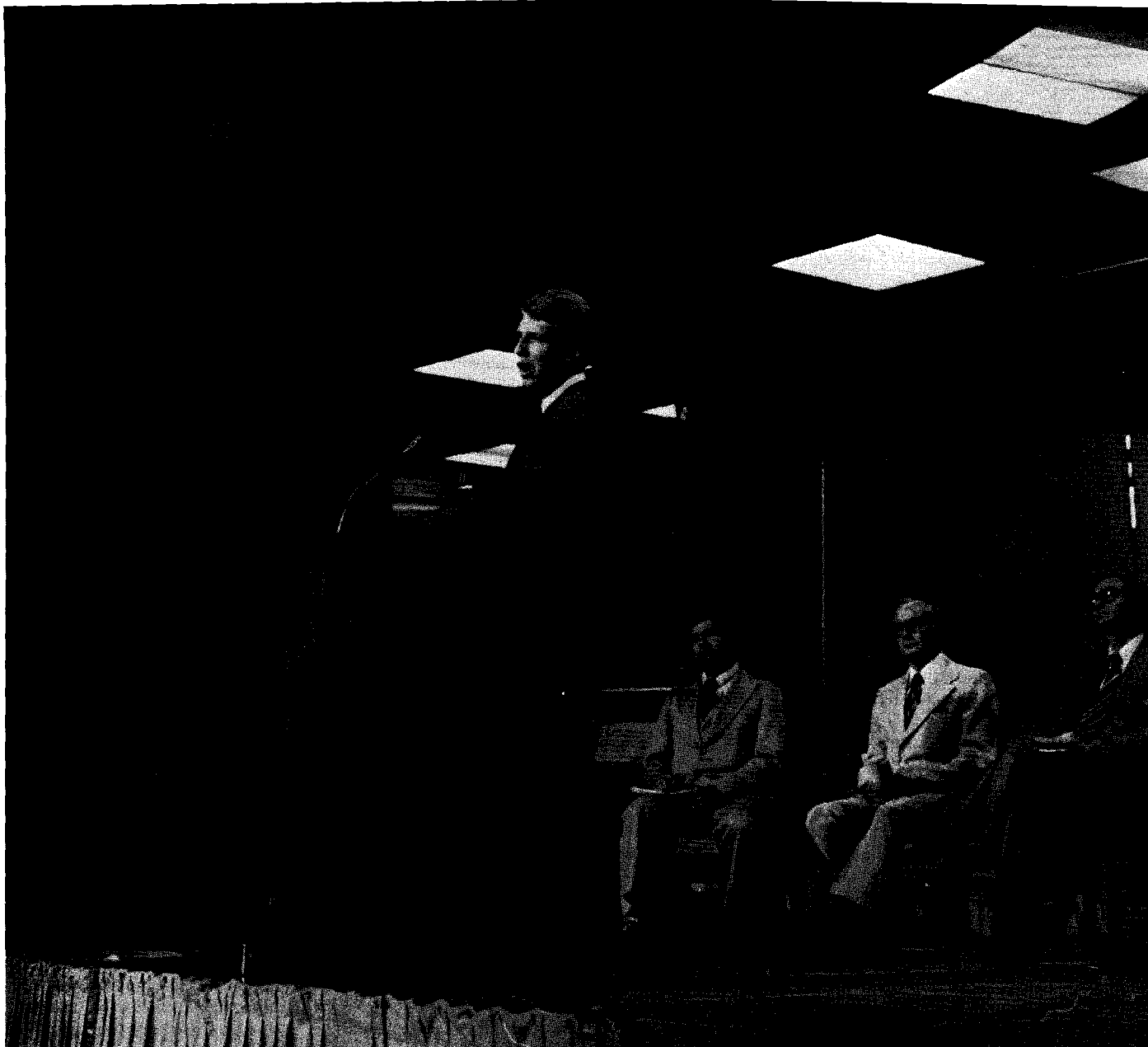
The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod organized a number of meetings to which other denominations were invited. On Saturday, June 17, Dr. Nederhood was the guest speaker on the subject of "The Challenge of Mass Communications." The following day, all commissioners were invited to join in the worship services of Christ Reformed Presbyterian Church in Grand Rapids. (A Christian Reformed service was held on the campus.) At the evening service, Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, President of Westminster Seminary (and a delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) was the preacher. From the words of Philipians 3:3, Dr. Clowney said that the true people of God are those whose trust is not in themselves, but in the Lord.

John Perkins

On Wednesday, June 21, the National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship arranged a breakfast meeting with John Perkins, founder, president and chairman of the board of the Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mississippi. Taking as his background the alienation between the Jews and the Samaritans as recorded in the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to John, Perkins applied Jesus's treatment of the Samaritan woman to the racial situation in North America. He urged that the Church must be the presence of God in the black community both for proclamation and manifestation. "In the past, evangelicals have stressed proclamation, whereas liberals have emphasized the importance of manifesting the Christian life. Both must be recognized as important," said Perkins.

In addition to sharing meetings together, commissioners shared dormitory and dining facilities on the spacious campus. An outdoor reception with refreshments was also held after the busi-

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Dr. Joel Nederhood preaching at the joint worship service.

ness meetings on Tuesday, June 20.

The great majority of the time, however, was spent in the separate synodical gatherings and general assemblies which were held at different locations on the campus.

In this issue of *The Guardian* we are publishing reports on each of these gatherings. These reports were written for us by members of the various churches. Dr. Clowney, who is chairman of our editorial committee, is providing his comments on the Grand Rapids meetings. We are also publishing, with permission, the text of Dr. Joel Nederhood's radio broadcast on *The Back to God Hour* for Sunday, June 18. It was devoted to the meeting of the NAPARC churches.

Christ's Unified Church

Joel Nederhood

The following address is of particular interest because it focusses attention on the NAPARC meeting held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The address was originally prepared for broadcast by Dr. Joel Nederhood, Radio Minister (The Back to God Hour) of the Christian Reformed Church, and is printed here with permission.

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:20, 21

I want to tell you about a man by the name of Dick Smith. He has a problem which is very common—possibly you have the same. And I want to show how a unique church meeting might perhaps provide a solution to Dick Smith's problem; possibly it could be a solution to yours as well.

Flight officer Dick Smith has been a pilot with a major airline for nearly ten years now; he flies the rear seat in a 727, and within the next 7 to 10 years he'll probably make captain. When I talked to him about his job he said, "If I were independently wealthy and I could do anything I wanted to do, I would still be an

airline pilot." He's about 37 now, and he's looking forward to bringing up his children during the next decade; generally life looks pretty good to him.

As he talked with me about his past, it seemed that he was a lot like others I know in that age bracket. That's why I want to tell you a little about him.

He told me how he had graduated from the Naval Academy and had flown for the Navy. It was thrilling to be an aircraft commander at 25. He was single then, and many of his enjoyments had been those typically enjoyed by young pilots far away from home. Among other things he had thought about women differently then. He told me how much his wife meant to him now and how he has come to regard his marriage as one of the most important elements of his life. And he told me about his three children and the way he felt about their growing up. He had found that having a family had introduced him to an entirely new dimension of life.

And then he told me that he noticed many of his friends were becoming interested in religion. Couples he knew who had gone through a period of rejecting the teachings of the church were beginning to read the Bible. He was very careful not to indicate just how he felt about this new trend himself, but he described his friends with great fascination. We talked about how interesting Jesus Christ is, and Christianity—what else have people found that has succeeded in keeping their attention for more than three years? Christianity continues to offer men and women so very much. Christ gives people a view of themselves, of their world, and of their destiny. He gives them peace, inspiration, and courage. There is so much in Christianity for us as individuals and families. And so this 37-year-old man and I began to talk about this strangely wonderful faith and to consider the alternatives.

Well, the alternatives to Christianity are not very exciting or interesting. But tell me, once a person sees that, once a person becomes interested in the Christian faith, where can he turn for help and guidance? And this brings me to Dick Smith's problem which I have reason to believe could well be your problem too. It's this: once a person stops rejecting Christianity and starts becoming curious about it, how can he find his

way through the jungle that meets him when he starts examining it?

This problem is caused by the many denominations we have today. I must confess that if I were in Dick Smith's shoes and I began to develop an interest in Christianity, I would be flabbergasted by the multitude of churches that are apparently waiting for me to ask a question about them. There are about 300 to 400 different varieties of church around, depending on how one classifies them.

Tell me, has this bothered you? Maybe your children are growing up and you feel that you would like to give them some direction so far as their spiritual life is concerned. You know you need the help of the church to do that, but you just don't know what church to go to. I would be terribly confused in that situation.

Well, something happened that could help you solve your problem. Five major church assemblies met at the same time in the same place. Five Reformed, or Presbyterian, denominations met on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They were not united in one church—each church is separate. Each conducted its own business. But they chose to meet together and to have a large service of combined prayer and praise on June 19, 1978, because they believe that they are more like one another than they are different from one another.

This event helps us see that in a sense there are not quite so many churches as there sometimes appears to be. Here were five denominations displaying their essential unity in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an organizational unity, but it is a unity that runs deep and strong. And I think that anyone who is seriously interested in finding a church for himself should know what makes these churches so similar to one another; he should know what makes them tick. Frankly, if a person is looking for a church home he might want to consider one of these churches for himself. But even if he is not interested in joining one of these churches, knowing what they stand for might help a person find a church in his community that could help him. So let's take a look at these churches briefly.

Before going any further I'll mention their names, and when I do you will perhaps be confused again by the fact that

these five churches exist at all. But remember that by their special meeting these churches are saying that they are united in some very basic convictions and goals. Their names listed alphabetically are: The Christian Reformed Church in North America; The Orthodox Presbyterian Church; The Presbyterian Church in America; The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod; and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. I realize that the names of these denominations tend to be confusing, and if you were trying to find your way into a church and ran across these five options, you would probably hold up your hands in despair. But these churches met in the same place at the same time to show that they stand together on important matters. Together they form what is called The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. Whatever church you finally decide to live within should take a like stand on the important matters that unite these churches. What are these important matters?

First of all, these churches are united in a common stand against false teaching. If you are interested at all in finding a church for yourself, you should know that everything that looks like the true church may not necessarily be the true church. Something severely damaging has happened over the last several centuries. False teaching has been introduced into the church, causing some churches to sell out to teachings that are opposed to the teachings of the Bible.

When I talked with Dick Smith, we talked about the absolute difference between the theory of evolution and the teaching of creation which we find in the Bible. I could tell that he had been deeply impressed by evolutionistic ideas. I wasn't surprised; most people have been impressed by these. But he did admit that, though evolution seems more reasonable to many, after they trace back far enough with their minds they begin to question the origin of the evolutionistic process too. Even with that admission, when a person like Dick Smith looks around for a church certain ideas that are part of the evolutionistic system are bound to stick in his mind.

Because of the widespread influence of the evolutionistic world-view, some church leaders during the 19th century



A view of the Calvin College campus.

and the early part of this century began to teach that the views of evolution should be made a part of the Christian position. Churches which did not resist this idea surrendered to a non-Christian world-view and tried to adjust their teachings accordingly.

And there were other church leaders who began to downgrade the importance of the Bible because of developments in philosophy and the study of history. Questions were raised concerning the reliability of the Bible, and the church became very unsure of itself.

Two of the churches involved in the combined gathering held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, trace their origins to their battle with the spirit of compromise that began to erode the church in Europe during the last century. The other churches trace their origin to the stand they took against false teachings expressed on the North American Continent.

Rev. Richard A. Barker of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church explains the background of his denomination by describing the event that convinced the founders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to break away from the larger denomination of which they were a part. He says that no event reveals the theological climate in the "old church more clearly than the so-called Auburn Affirmation of 1924. In that document some 1300 ministers . . . declared that it was unnecessary, in order to remain true to one's ordination vows, to believe in the

inerrancy of the Scriptures, or in our Lord's virgin birth, miracles, substitutionary atonement, or bodily resurrection. Those truths they regarded only as 'theories.'" Because the church had come to the point where it tolerated ministers who denied such fundamental doctrines, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was started.

The churches that met in one another's presence in Grand Rapids, June 1978, are united in their understanding that the church today is being attacked on every side, not only by those outside it but also by those within it who fail to see that the Christian, biblical world-view is different from the evolutionistic, humanistic world-view. They recognize together, too, that the battle against false doctrines is never finished. These churches recognize tendencies within their own fellowship which, if not resisted, can cause the truth to be eroded.

Together they publicly announce that they believe that the Bible is indeed the infallible, inerrant, Word of the Living God; that Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is the Son of God who lived, died, and rose again for the sins of His people. They know that He will come again.

When you examine the churches of your neighborhood to see which one can help you the most, make sure that you find a church that believes the essential teachings of the Christian faith, held throughout the centuries by the people of God and expressed in the historic creeds of the church.

In addition to the unity of conviction that these churches express, they also have a unity of program which is strikingly similar. As I have worshipped in churches of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, I have noticed a common interest in maintaining the worship of the church in the purest possible form. These five denominations are alike in their understanding that the assembling of the people of God for worship on Sunday is not just a simple gathering of people who happen to be interested in religion. They recognize that a worship service is a unique meeting, a service of praise which the congregation offers in thanksgiving to their Father in heaven and a time when they can listen to God's Word in obedience.

The churches we are discussing draw their ministers from several seminaries: Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri; Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Each of these seminaries is characterized by its emphasis on the importance of preaching the Scriptures that is central in the worship services of these churches. There is a recognition that the people of God will grow in their faith only in the degree that they regularly receive the authoritative preaching of God's Word. Worship services in these churches have a distinct quality caused by this strong emphasis on the preaching ministry.

There is also a strong emphasis in each of these churches on the training of the youth of the church. This is caused by their common understanding of the covenantal nature of the Bible. By that I mean that the Bible teaches that God has a covenant people, a people with whom He has entered into a special agreement. This means that parents stand before God with their children. God says in the words of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost: "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39). The members of these churches understand that the children of believing parents are holy children, not

in the sense that they are perfect, but in the sense that they have been set apart by God for God.

So we find in each of these churches a strong emphasis on the training of children both in church teaching and in Bible knowledge. The Christian Reformed Church has a highly developed education department which publishes a wide range of Sunday school, catechism, and Bible school material, as do also the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian churches.

In addition to a strong focus on the training of the youth in these churches, the five denominations which met in one another's presence in Grand Rapids, Michigan, support Christian day schools, schools in which children learn about our world in the light of the Word of God. The Christian Reformed Church continuously encourages its membership faithfully to promote such schools, and its members have developed the National Union of Christian Schools which has member schools throughout the United States and Canada.

Rev. Paul Martin, Clerk of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, has expressed the interest of this church in Christian day school education this way: "We must see a culture developed under the crown rights of King Jesus. The culture can be established as the church comes to the unity of the faith under Christ and as unbelievers are converted. The faithful preaching of the Word will give the basis for cultural development. This then has its effect in education. A statement on education adopted by the 1977 Synod indicates greater interest and concern for Christian education on the primary and secondary level." Indeed, members of this church have brought to the attention of the Supreme Court of the United States the necessity for the provision of Christian day schools for all children of Christian parents in our land.

So here are five churches who have a great deal uniting them. And if you are looking for a church, you should consider a church that expresses programs such as these, programs of worship and of instructing its children.

Anyone who is beginning to be interested in the church scene today ought to examine this remarkable gathering of five

major church assemblies in Grand Rapids, Michigan, June of '78. True, they are five different denominations, and as such they contribute to the confusion that is a part of the church scene. On the other hand, their similarities are very striking, and more impressive than their differences is their unity in Christ. It is this unity that tends to eliminate some of the confusion that may bother those who examine the church scene in order to find a church for themselves.

Surely the common stand these churches are taking against false religious teaching makes them very interesting to anyone who is serious about knowing the truth of the Word of God. And their common programs which involve strong emphasis on worship and the instruction of youth makes them very interesting to anyone who wants a meaningful worship experience and who wants his children exposed to the truth of God both in church and in a Christian day school. Along with what we have talked about, it is important no notice that all these churches feel that they have something extremely interesting and helpful to offer our modern world. They believe that though they represent a faith that is rooted in the past they are equipped to help their members live meaningfully in the present.

Surely this is one of the reasons they met in one another's presence and also together in their common worship of prayer and praise. They did so to encourage one another and also to display to the world that they are ready and willing to be of full service to any and all who are earnestly seeking the presence of Jesus in the fellowship of His church.

These churches are united in a common drive to reach out. To be sure, this eagerness to reach out and touch the lives of others in their communities varies from congregation to congregation. But over all, these churches are united in the conviction that they have something to give to all those who come to them. They offer the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ Himself who says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). These denominations with their differing historical backgrounds and their separate organizations are actually one church, and they know it. They do not offer themselves with their peculiarities, with the ethnic

characteristics and the historical events that have made them what they are, but they together offer the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their combined mission programs are impressive with fields throughout the entire world and with an enthusiastic outreach on the North American continent. This very message is part of a radio ministry of one of the five churches that was begun in 1939 and that today reaches out to the entire world in eight languages, using both radio and television. There is a growing drive within these churches compelling them to make clear to everyone who contacts them that they can lead men and women toward the Savior and can set them moving along the road which leads to life eternal.

And so I wanted you to know about these churches and about their remarkable meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is encouraging to see denominations gathered together in this way. Actually a gathering of churches like this is an answer to prayer. It's an answer to Jesus' prayer. He wanted His people to stand shoulder to shoulder in this world to express their unity. He was thinking about this when He was about to be crucified. John 17 tells us what Jesus said:

"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (Vss. 20, 21).

When five churches meet together as these churches did, there's glory there—the glory of Jesus Christ. And if you are looking for a church for yourself, you might do well to consider a church that is part of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. If you are confused about the church scene today, one of their congregations could help take your confusion away. Even more importantly, one of their churches may bring you and Jesus Christ together, and there is nothing more important than that.

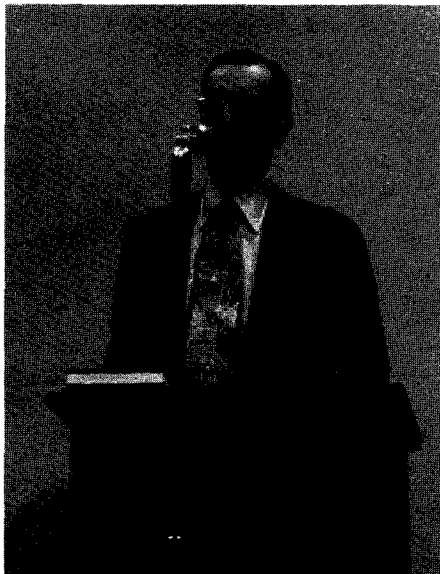
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

W. David Laverell

The forty-fifth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was called to order at eight p.m. on Thursday, June 15, 1978. The Rev. Wendell L. Rocky constituted the assembly leading the opening worship and bringing a timely message, "When Moses' Sight Failed," based on Numbers 20:1-13. The pastors of the church were instructed from the example of Moses who on this occasion forgot his role as servant of God, the fact that the "rebels" with whom he had to deal were the Lord's people, and the character of God. Following the message the Rev. James C. Petty, Jr. administered the Lord's Supper.

On Friday morning after the presentation of reports from the stated clerk, the statistician, and the trustees, the Assembly elected the Rev. Richard Barker as stated clerk and the Rev. Larry Conard as moderator. The Rev. James L. Bosgraf was appointed assistant clerk. The final step in the approval of the new Form of Government was taken as the Assembly approved those portions involving changes in the ordination vows as required by the old Form of Government. The Assembly then adjourned in order to allow the appointed advisory committees to meet. Sixteen such groups were organized to deal with the reports of the various committees, overtures, communications, and complaints. The system of advisory committees allows questions of substance to be dealt with at the committee level rather than making a first appearance on the floor of the Assembly.

Dr. W. David Laverell is a licentiate of the Philadelphia presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.



The Rev. John R. Galbraith announcing his retirement as general secretary of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Saturday's session was occupied with the reports of the committees on Home Missions and Church Extension, Foreign Missions, and Christian Education. The Assembly requested the Committee on Foreign Missions "to explore the possibility of more aggressively providing opportunities for fully or partially supported unordained people who express a desire to serve as supportive workers on the foreign field." The general secretary of this committee, the Rev. John Galbraith, addressed the Assembly on his thirty-one years of service and his expectations for further service following his retirement at the end of this year. The Assembly showed its appreciation with a standing ovation.

On Monday the report of the Committee on Stewardship was considered. A total budget for the major committees of \$750,000 was approved with \$185,000 for Christian Education, \$280,000 for Foreign Missions, \$240,000 for Home Missions, and \$45,000 for Stewardship. The last figure includes \$12,600 to set up a program of deferred giving which will allow this committee to provide financial guidance as an integral part of stewardship for members of the church.

The report of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries contained encouraging financial news. Giving for 1977 increased by \$12,259.56—to \$44,757.29. Areas of special concern for 1978 include the aged ministers fund, emergency medical funds, disaster relief, and Ugandan refugee assistance. A report prepared at the request of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod on "The Theology of Diaconal World Involvement" touched off debate on a familiar question: the emphasis to be placed on the diaconal needs of the church in relation to those of the world at large. This report was recommended to the committee, and Dr. Edmund P. Clowney and the Rev. James C. Petty, Jr. were appointed to work with the committee on its revision.

The report of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations was presented on Monday afternoon. The Assembly approved its recommendation to authorize the discussion of merger among the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod, and the Presbyterian Church in America. The Assembly later adopted a resolution expressing a continuing desire to make further progress toward union with the RPCES and voted to explore the possibility of including the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America in future merger discussions.

The approval of several relatively minor changes to the new Form of Government brought an end to the work of its Committee on Revisions which was dissolved with gratitude for its "faithful and arduous labor." The report of the new Committee on Revisions to the Book of Discipline and the Directory for Public Worship brought forth the commendation of the Assembly and led to extensive debate on a proposed statement that would limit judicial accountability for an ordained officer of the church to the "Confession of Faith and the Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, which confessional standards are the legal standards of orthodoxy." The Assembly expressed dissatisfaction with this wording and urged the committee "to retain the definition of an offense in the present Book of Discipline" and "to develop a formulation that will better express the place of our secondary standards in dis-

cipline." By its action the Assembly declared a preference for defining an offense in terms of the Scriptures directly but admitted the need for study to determine the role of our secondary standards in discipline.

The Assembly received two requests for advice in regard to candidates for the ministry who have not fulfilled all of the requirements of the Form of Government. The Presbytery of Philadelphia was advised to complete its examination of Mr. Calvin K. Cummings for licensure with a view to waiving the requirements of an additional one-half year of seminary and competency in Hebrew. The Presbytery of the Dakotas was advised to receive Dr. Duane E. Spencer as an ordained minister of the Word, "waiving the formal academic requirements he lacks" after further formal and informal examination.

The Committee on Proof Texts for the Catechisms reported its plans to make available for publication within six months its proof texts for the Shorter Catechism. The question of proceeding immediately to publish an edition of this Catechism with the new proof texts was intensely debated, and this course of action was approved in spite of the reservations of some who felt that it would be preferable to submit the text to sessions and presbyteries for study prior to publication.

On Wednesday the report of the Committee on the Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit was received by the Assembly and sent to the sessions for study. The report was also submitted to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. This report does not become an addition to the standards of the church but is on the order of "pious advice." Among its conclusions were: prophecy and tongues brought God's revelation; tongues were a temporary judgment sign against unbelievers; spiritual gifts are not dependent upon tongues; New Testament tongues were genuine languages; private devotional use of tongues is not a gift separate from its public exercise with interpretation; and the gifts of prophecy and tongues ceased with the close of the apostolic age.

The report of the Committee on Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) Matters occasioned sharp debate when a substitute motion to withdraw immediately from

the organization in question was offered in place of a proposal to participate in its incorporation. This substitute was decisively defeated, and the Presbyterian Church in America and Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod were urged to consider joining in order to provide more adequate representation from the North American continent. The Assembly also acted to express appreciation to the churches in South Africa for their "resolve for more biblical relationships" which have come from discussions with the RES Interpretive Commission and to spur them to further implementation of Christ's command to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

The Committee on Housing for Retired Ministers addressed a pressing problem in our church calling for a review of ministers' compensation packages in light of scriptural teaching.

On Thursday the Committee on Race reported on a general lack of progress within the church. Although there is little awareness of any shortcomings, our membership "does not even begin to reflect the plurality of peoples in American society," "some congregations have moved out of neighborhoods into which minority persons have begun to move," and we have not addressed the economic, social, and political oppression of "minority persons in America." Mr. Cyril T. Nightengale took the occasion to deliver a well received address urging the Assembly to view the racial question from a broader perspective than that of black/white.

The question of a possible denominational magazine produced the longest debate of the assembly with delegates differing on the breadth of such a publication and the composition of the committee proposed to consider it.

The action of the Christian Reformed Church in approving the ordination of women as deacons and the interest expressed in other NAPARC member churches was the occasion of the appointment of a special committee to meet with representatives of the Christian Reformed Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America and the Presbyterian Church in America to study the matter as an issue of joint concern.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod

John H. Van Voorhis

Many commissioners to the 156th General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RP-CES), having sat through long hours in previous synods vigorously debating such issues as the role of women in the church, church union, the beverage use of alcohol, abortion, and ecclesiastical separation, could understandably have hoped for a synod free of prolonged disputes. With one exception, this was in fact achieved, as Synod met from June 16-22 on the beautiful Calvin College campus in the midst of NAPARC brethren.

Fellowship and worship

Among numerous opportunities provided for worship were stimulating and challenging addresses by the retiring moderator, the Rev. Charles Holliday, Jr., on "The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ephesus"; Dr. Joel Nederhood, radio minister of the Christian Reformed Church's widely appreciated *Back to God Hour*, on "The Challenge of Mass Communications"; Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, president of Westminster Seminary, on "The True People of God"; and Dr. Roy Blackwood, a pastor in The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, on "The Character of Christ." Other NAPARC brethren led Bible studies on the Holy Spirit.

Mr. John H. Van Voorhis is a ruling elder in Christ Reformed Presbyterian Church, Oreland, Pa.

Major agencies

The Covenant College program is being broadened and strengthened in many areas, despite increasing financial needs. Dr. Martin Essenberg has assumed the office of president (retiring president Dr. Marion Barnes held that position for thirteen years). Synod heard with obvious gratitude the news that the Presbyterian Church in America had approved its entry into a gradual program of joint governance of the college. Covenant Seminary, itself having undergone a transition year from the presidency of Dr. Robert Rayburn to that of Dr. William Barker, reported substantial growth in many areas as it seeks to move from present enrollment of about 170 to a projected 300 enrollment of students in future years.

A "picture with varying hues" was brought to Synod by World Presbyterian Missions (WPM). Continuing solid work in the ongoing gospel enterprise was described, as seventy missionaries labor in various foreign fields, supported by over \$1 million in contributions last year. However, there were also setbacks. Mission work in Ras al Khaimah has been closed due to government pressure, a missionary family has been denied re-entry into Peru, recruits are not being obtained as quickly as needed, and the worldwide weakening of the dollar increases financial pressures. A new emphasis in church-planting strategy has been begun by National Presbyterian Missions (NPM). Instead of seeking to start new churches from the agency level, the local and presbytery levels will be encouraged and assisted by NPM in performing such work. Presbytery response has been encouraging. In 1977 there were twenty-four mission churches in the RPCES; by the end of 1978 there are expected to be at least twelve more.

Christian Training, Inc., the denomination's educational arm, has clearly gained much greater acceptance by the churches—at least forty churches will be involved in a new coordinated curriculum Sunday school program by the fall of 1978. The Board of Home Ministries, moving with clearer direction and goals in the past two years under the leadership of ruling elder Earl Witmer, has revitalized its program of meeting diaconal needs. In addition to previous ministries, it has entered into assistance with

adoption and foster care services, disaster relief, and a work among Spanish speaking peoples in Philadelphia, among others. Support from local churches is growing.

Women as deacons

The 1977 Synod affirmed, after prolonged debate, that the office of deacon should be limited to qualified men, although unordained women could be organized as deaconesses if a particular congregation so chose. The question returned to the 1978 Synod, to the surprise of many commissioners, in the form of a presbytery overture, asking that Synod "affirm the prerogative of each particular church . . . to determine whether its diaconate shall include women as well as men, and whether they shall be ordained or unordained, and whether they shall be called "deacons" or "deaconesses." After over a full day's debate, during which related questions of the effect of previous Synod declarations, the meaning of ordination, and the meaning of subscription were raised, Synod approved a recommended addition to the Form of Government to read: "Only men may be ordained to the office of deacon." One commissioner, probably facetiously, responding to previous arguments about the use of "men" as a generic term, suggested that further clarity could be obtained by stating that "only men (male) may be ordained . . .", i.e., only male men!

Status of the PCUS

Three members of Southern Presbytery complained of its action approving on grounds of expediency a joint Vacation Bible school of a local RPCES congregation and a neighboring congregation of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The Judicial Commission recommended sustaining the action on narrow technical grounds, pointing out that the Form of Government specifically allows such local activities with "particular churches free from apostasy" and that the PCUS has never been found "officially or explicitly" to be apostate. However, the Commission noted in its response, which was approved by Synod, that whether a particular church is free from apostasy must include consideration not only of the character of the local

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America

John H. White

For its 149th meeting, the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) elected as its moderator Dr. Bruce Stewart, President of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Since Dr. Stewart has been the chairman of the Interchurch Correspondence and Study Committee since the 1950's, his election at the time of the concurrent meetings of the NAPARC Synods and General Assemblies was especially appropriate.

The RPCNA Synod meeting began one day earlier this year in order to devote time to the discussion of a revised Declaration and Testimony, a distinctive concept of the RPCNA. By this document the denomination updates, corrects, and applies the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and the revised testimony will be published in parallel columns with the Confession of Faith. A committee has been working extensively on drafts and revisions for four years and chapters 1-20 have now been adopted. An extra day is planned for the 1979 Synod in order to adopt some, if not all, of the remaining chapters.

A committee also presented a brief statement of the beliefs of the RPCNA to be used as a popular witnessing tool by the membership. This document was received by the Synod with the understanding that it is not a subordinate standard and that suggestions for revisions would be forwarded to the com-

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mittee. The decision to draft the statement was made at last year's synod meeting in the form of a resolution requesting assistance for the denomination as she seeks to speak to the secular and humanistic culture. The content includes: "Introduction—God has Spoken; Where did life come from?; What is man's purpose in life?; What is God's solution to evil?; Where is history going?; How does God tell us what He wants?; How should we relate to the Church?; How should our families serve God?; What is our duty to the government?; How should we earn our living?; What about 'the pursuit of happiness'?; How shall we educate ourselves?; How does the Christian face the future?"

Several hours of debate centered around the issue of public covenanting, a historic position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church which involves the conviction that God's people should solemnly recognize their obligations before God at appropriate periods in history. Public covenants involve confession of sin and vows to obey God in specific ways. The practice of public covenanting is illustrated in church history by such documents as the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1638, and in North America by a Covenant drafted in 1871 and renewed in 1954. All of the elders and deacons of the RPCNA take a vow that states: "Do you believe that public covenanting is an ordinance of God to be observed by churches and by nations; that the obligations of such covenants are perpetual; and that the Covenant of 1871 is binding upon the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America?"

In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion about the terms "perpetual" and "binding." Several ordinands have taken exception to the vow and others have felt that they could not in good conscience administer the vow. A committee has been studying the issue for several years and presented a report suggesting that the vow be dropped and that public covenanting be explained in the revised Testimony. In a compromise move it was decided to send down in overture to local sessions the proposal to omit the last part of the vow: "that the obligation of such covenants are perpetual; and that the Covenant of 1871 is binding upon the RPCNA." The first

part of the vow was recommitted to the Committee for further study and possible revision. This writer senses in the decision a desire to recognize the serious limitations of a practice which has to be explained in terms of a distinctive past, but at the same time a desire to affirm the need for a corporate response to God's covenant in each age.

The Foreign Mission Board was authorized by the Synod to call for an ordained teaching elder and two self-supporting families to be engaged in a church planting ministry in Australia in cooperation with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia. The Evangelical Church of Cyprus has called Pastor Argos Zodiates, an ordained RPCNA teaching elder, to minister in Cyprus. There was also deep concern expressed about the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland where there are five congregations but only one settled pastor. An action was taken to respond positively to any requests for personnel from the Scottish Church. Last year's Synod approved a set of biblical guidelines and procedures for the RPCNA to provide support for "specialized overseas ministry outside the denominational context." The Foreign Mission Board announced to Synod that such an agreement has been established with Wycliffe Bible Translators and that a missionary supported by the RPCNA is being sent to New Guinea.

All of the agencies of the Synod are experiencing financial pressures. In the past two years there have been sizeable synodical budget deficits. It was necessary for the synod to cut some of this year's requests from various agencies as much as 20 percent. A major portion of one afternoon was devoted to the discussion of financial priorities. This discussion resulted in the election of a special committee to determine biblical priorities for programs and financial policy. Some delegates argued that the denomination should gradually divest itself of unrestricted endowed funds, because of the biblical principles involved as well as the current financial exigencies.

The Geneva College Board of Trustees reported that the College had experienced the blessing of God in its total program, both in growing student concern for

The Presbyterian Church In America

Frank J. Smith

When the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) came to town the breakfast menu changed somewhat—there were grits in Grand Rapids! But so did the entire scene at Calvin College change as the PCA annual assembly brought 563 commissioners, along with families and friends, to the campus.

The Sixth General Assembly began on the evening of Monday, June 19, with a worship service which included retiring moderator John T. Clark's sermon on Luke 12:27-32 ("Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give to you the kingdom") and the observance of the Lord's Supper. Following this, the Assembly proceeded to elect a new moderator. From a slate of nominees, Dr. G. Aitken Taylor was elected. Dr. Taylor is the well-known editor of *The Presbyterian Journal*.

Immediately prior to the adjournment of the first session, commissioners were given an orientation to Assembly operation by the stated clerk, Dr. Morton Smith, and the moderator of the First General Assembly, the Rev. Jack Williamson. Mr. Williamson had three bits of advice for his fellow presbyters: "Be ready, be brief, be quiet." As the Assembly encountered lack of time toward its close, many realized that this wisdom had not always been heeded.

The reports of the various committee reports which follow are discussed topically rather than chronologically.

Mission to the World (MTW)

On Tuesday morning, June 20, the MTW Permanent Committee gave a slide

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Dinner - table discussion.

presentation, narrated by its Coordinator of Church Relations, the Rev. Kennedy Smartt, showing the work of its 146 missionaries around the world. The Rev. Paul McKaughan, Coordinator for MTW, illustrated past and projected growth. The third Sunday of May was selected as a day of prayer and fasting, with provision for local sessional option to choose another day close to it if the elders felt that the Lord's Day would not be appropriate for fasting. A goal of having 250 missionaries by 1982 was set. Sixty of these will be short-term, and one half of the total will be engaged in church planting.

Mission to the United States (MUS)

The program presentation of MUS consisted of about 40 pastors from across the country telling of their churches' current places of meeting. The General Assembly authorized the permanent committee to hire a coordinator.

One of the most controversial parts of the report concerned the establishment of an urban, poor and minority ministries sub-committee. The Rev. James B. Moore, former missionary to Japan, declared, "There will not be a minority heaven. I see no reason to have a minor-

ity church ministered to by a minority committee." This was countered by the Rev. Fred Marsh, who ministers in a slowly changing community in Chattanooga, Tn., "It's not a question of having a church within a church, it's a question of having the necessary expertise." The Rev. Don Sherow, a black pastor in Augusta, Ga., added, "I think some of us . . . want to pretend that we're not a predominantly white denomination . . . If you really want to affect black America, you've got to recruit them—everyone else is."

John Perkins, president of Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mississippi, said, "I'm just praying that your sociological position would be as good as your theological position . . . This church needs to get involved in a creative way, not just a normal way . . . I think you're going to see riots in the black community in the next five years like you've never seen before, and this time the church ought to be there."

The recommendation passed with only a handful of "no" votes.

The MUS Committee was instructed to appoint a sub-committee to devise a practical manual for campus ministry,

with the provision that this sub-committee "include strong representation from among those actually involved in this specialized ministry." After much debate, including concern over a concentration of power, the General Assembly decided that loan applications from churches would be handled by a sub-committee, consisting of one teaching and two ruling elders, of the Permanent Committee.

The boundaries of Pacific Presbytery were extended from including only the southern part of California, to including all of that state and the states of Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, Arizona, and New Mexico. Also approved was a division of the present Carolina Presbytery, covering the eastern two-thirds of North Carolina, into Eastern Carolina and Central Carolina presbyteries.

Christian Education and Publications (CE/P)

This Committee is in deep financial difficulty, currently receiving only sixty-four percent of its budget. Coordinator Charles Dunahoo said, "We're not crying 'wolf!', we're crying for help." The assembly passed a recommendation which admonished its congregations to support the work of this committee.

The committee's report began on Tuesday evening (June 20) with a presentation

of the proposed joint venture with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod with regard to Covenant College. The proposal, having been referred back to the committee last year, was being suggested again, along with a philosophy of Christian education. Much of the debate centered on the financial aspects. Proponents argued that the PCA would not be committed to giving any money, and that PCA congregations were already giving to the school.

Others argued that no clear mandate was given to the church to engage in higher education. A substitute motion by Dr. O. Palmer Robertson would have the General Assembly express appreciation to the RPCES; affirm "enthusiastic commitment" to the responsibility of parents to engage in Christian education; affirm the distinctive role of the institutional church; and instruct the CE/P Committee to find ways to motivate people to support reformed higher educational institutions.

On the other side, proponents such as the Rev. Don Darling, former staff member at Covenant, noted that it was inconsistent to support Christian day schools and high schools and not the college. Dr. Robertson's substitute failed, however, and the vote to enter into the joint venture won, 259-145.

Also passed was the whole report on theological education, which establishes a uniform curriculum for presbyteries which are planning on being more directly involved in the training of ministerial candidates. The program consists of three basic areas—scriptural content, Christian doctrine, and practical theology, and may be effected through use of either the 2+2 or 3+1 plans (i.e., two years in seminary with two years as an apprentice pastor, or three years in seminary with one year as an apprentice pastor) in conjunction with an approved seminary. The program is flexible enough so that presbyteries will also be able to perform all of the training. Also enacted, despite some opposition, was the organization of a certification committee, in order to guarantee conformity among various presbyteries.

Ad-Interim Committee to Study Abortion

The General Assembly adopted a strong statement against abortion. The

report was heard after a slide presentation, which was shown in spite of "objection to consideration" by some members of the court. After overwhelmingly adopting the report, the Assembly approved publication of it, and authorized the committee to prepare a slide presentation based upon the one which was given. It also voted, with little dissent, to send a powerfully-worded statement of this action to President Carter, leaders in Congress, and the Chief Justice, calling upon them to repent. The committee had utilized the OPC 1971 and RPCES 1975 reports on abortion and the commissioners here desired the Inter-Church Relations Committee to issue jointly with denominations with which the PCA has fraternal relations this statement: "We condemn the intentional killing of unborn children." But the Assembly backed off from making "the grave sin of abortion" and failure of presbyters to affirm the sanctity of life grounds for discipline, on the basis of the principle that it would raise that consideration to the level of the church constitution. Later efforts to reconsider Assembly's "no exception" stance on abortion failed. The committee report, which stated that "since the unborn infant has no intent to kill its mother, principles of self-defense do not directly apply," was allowed to stand.

Ad-Interim Committee to Study the Number of Church Offices

The most interesting debate centered around this issue, which had been considered by each General Assembly since 1974. The bulk of the material written for the majority report was by Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, whose three papers covered 86 pages of the commissioner's handbook. He advocated the Triune Office viewpoint (the prophethood, kingship, and priesthood of all believers being intensified in the three offices of minister, elder, and deacon.) The majority contended that it was following a more broad biblical hermeneutic than was minority report number one, which purportedly dealt mostly with data from the pastoral epistles. Mr. John Snyder, a member of the committee, presented that report—a "radical" two-office position—which would have abolished all legislated distinctions between "teaching" and "ruling" elders. The Rev. Thurston Futch of the Central Georgia Presby-

tery, another committee member, emphasized that the Bible is not a detailed book of church government as he presented minority report number two, last year's majority ("two-and-a-half office") view, for consideration.

The assembly quickly substituted minority report number two for the majority report. John Snyder then tried the same for minority report number one. This substitute predictably lost, but the margin of 25-412 surprised many.

Committee on Administration

One of the big concerns was that of money. During the administration committee report the Rev. Jack Williamson proposed that per capita estimates be given to the congregations through the presbyteries, and then amounts of pledges "and/or estimated income" be sent back to the stewardship sub-committee and from there to the four permanent committees. A budget greater than \$4 million was approved. Included in this are the following items: Administration—\$222,000; CE/P—\$554,000; MUS—\$785,802; MTW—\$2,721,000.

Inter-Church Relations

The Ad-Interim Committee to Study the Biblical Basis of Church Union had earlier brought in a report which, on the basis of John 17 and other Scripture passages, definitely urged organizational unity, especially among those who are reformed. Because of this, the Inter-Church Relations Committee of Commissioners advocated that the PCA begin immediately to talk with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, in order to discuss how merger may be effected, with no ultimate commitment to any such union. The motion passed late in the assembly on a hand vote. The assembly twice voted down resolutions which would have invited the congregations, presbyteries, and assemblies and synods of Reformed denominations to join the PCA without the necessity of often controversial merger talks.

The commissioners also approved the establishment of a "Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel," despite objection to the ensuing cost, by former Army chap-

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The Fine Arts Center (site of the CRC synod).

The Christian Reformed Church

Jochem Vugteveen

The 1978 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America opened its meetings with a prayer service in the Lagrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Rev. Jacob Eppinga preached the sermon which was entitled "All For One." Prayers were offered for the church's ministry and constituents as well as for the church universal.

A number of fraternal delegates were present from sister churches at home and abroad: the Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands, the Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines, the Dutch Re-

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formed Church of Sri Lanka, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapdong) and the Korean Presbyterian Church in America.

But ecumenical concern came also to expression in Synod's unanimous adoption of the "Koinonia Declaration"—a statement of biblical principles applied to the social-political conditions in South Africa. This declaration had been drawn up by South African Christians and is now being distributed to the clergy of this disturbed nation. A special moment of prayer was observed on behalf of those who are spearheading this effort and whose safety is in daily jeopardy.

The church's willingness to concern itself with one of the most challenging world problems—world hunger—was evident in the synod's response to the proposals of the Task Force on World Hunger. The 1976 Synod called for formation of such a task force with the mandate to assess the need, to examine what is being presently done, and to "articulate biblical answers to the many issues involved," as well as "delineate concrete applications and implementations for our congregational and denominational life." The 1978 Synod adopted the following Declaration on World Hunger:

Recognizing God as the Creator of all things and man as his steward;
Confessing that God breaks into the lives of his people with his Word and Spirit, training them in patterns of love and justice;
Finding in God's Word his liberality for men and the whole creation, and protective laws for the defenseless and underprivileged;
Remembering the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who entered poverty so that others might become rich; and
Listening to God's call to his people to disciple all nations and to practice love and justice in the earth;

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church acknowledges that the alleviation of hunger at home and abroad is an integral part of our Christian responsibility,

and asks

that all members of the Christian Reformed Church devote themselves to Gratitude, Compassion, Repentance, and Justice as they respond to World Hunger with a ministry of word and deed.

The adoption of this resolution was followed by the adoption of a detailed action program for individuals, congrega-

tions, and the denomination. The Task Force on World Hunger was continued for another year to give further guidance to the implementation of the action programs as well as "to continue their work on the structural and systemic problems causing world hunger, and to develop appropriate responses to them."

Another decision highlighted the reformed concern with the social issues and problems confronting our society. Each congregation was urged to establish a social justice committee. The task of these social justice committees is to aid local Christians in addressing themselves to the local issues. The issues demanding regional and/or national/international responses are to be addressed to the broader ecclesiastical assemblies (classis and synod).

The most controversial issue was raised by the study report on "Hermeneutical Principles Governing Women in Ecclesiastical Office." Both the minority and majority recommendations allowed for opening the office of deacon to women. After considerable debate, Synod adopted the minority report which included the stipulation that the task of the deacons should be clearly distinguished from that of the elders and ministers.

The official place of the lay evangelist in the fabric of the Church has been discussed in our church for the last fifty years. This year's synod declared that the office of lay-evangelist is a fourth ecclesiastical office. Lay-evangelists are to be called to a specific mission field. They will be examined by Classis. Upon passing the examination, the lay-evangelist will then receive ordination to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments in that specific field of labor. The solution alleviates many of the frustrations and problems which lay-evangelists have experienced throughout their ministry.

The church school curriculum developers received the go-ahead for the development of a young adult and adult program of studies. These will deal with biblical themes, church history, doctrine and contemporary issues. The development of this part of the program will fill the gap in the already existing and widely appreciated curriculum.

The Synodical Interim Committee was charged with the continuation of research

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NAPARC '78

Edmund P. Clowney

"NAPARC '78" has slipped into history without much claim to being historic. Commissioners from the five church gatherings sat together once in the gym of Calvin College for a service of worship. They also stood together in cafeteria lines and congregated on the campus for a half hour one evening to top off three big meals with free sundaes. But most of their time was spent in separate assemblies debating the same issues.

Each church, of course, had house-keeping details to attend to. Yet even routine business covered the same areas: missions at home and abroad, Christian education, the stewardship of funds.

When it came to the most debated issues, the similarity was even more striking. Some of these questions are inevitable for churches that would serve Christ in our world. What is the calling of the church in its ministry of mercy, confronted by the crisis of world hunger? How may the church bear witness on such issues as abortion and racism? Another common issue seems to stem from recent concern about church order: what is the relation of the office of the minister of the Word to that of the ruling elder? Must a man with the spiritual gifts for rule in the church also possess preaching gifts to be made an elder?

Yet another question concerns the diaconate. Does the New Testament recognize the ministry of women in this office? Does "ordination" imply ruling authority in the church?

The similarities of agenda in the NAPARC churches seem greater yet, when compared to the issues raised in the "main-line" denominations. There is quite a gulf between considering whether Phoebe was a deaconess (Romans 16:1) and facing the demands of practicing homosexuals that their life-style be ap-

proved for the gospel ministry.

We can understand Dr. James Kennedy's reaction to this assembly in the Presbyterian Church in America. The Coral Ridge pastor found it like a Caribbean cruise for a survivor from the Titanic.

Yet (to change the figure!) the real watershed must not be lost from view in the NAPARC churches. It is simply whether we seek to please God or to please men. Are we seeking to *understand* the Word of God, receiving what God says in the hearing of faith, or are we trying to *adapt* the Word of God to our own standards and to the mind-set of our contemporaries? If we begin to adapt, the first change may be minor, but the watershed is crossed.

On the other hand, to hear the Word of God with hearty obedience does not mean simply reaffirming every tradition of our own religious sub-culture. To be reformed, as we are often reminded, is to be re-forming; indeed, reformation is not enough. The Lord calls us to transformation. That means that instead of our bending God's Word into our shape, God's Word bends us into his shape; the form of new creatures in Christ Jesus.

We have not left behind the issues that were crucial in the formation of the NAPARC churches: the authority of Scripture, the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ, the substitutionary atonement, the doctrines of grace. Let the pressures against these sound doctrines keep shifting. It does little good to defend the infallible authority of the Bible if what we affirm about inspiration we evade by interpretation. There is not much value in an inspired record of what we interpret to be apostolic prejudices!

We may praise the Lord for the faithfulness to his Word found in the assemblies of NAPARC '78. The most vigorous debate did not challenge God's Word but only our understanding of it. Some observers did feel, however, that the watershed issue emerged in the debates of the Christian Reformed Synod regarding the ordaining of women as deacons. If that be true, all the more weight should be given to a motion introduced into the OPC assembly by John Galbraith, proposing a joint study of this issue by a committee representative of the NAPARC churches. The motion was carefully framed pointing out the in-

volvement of the various churches with this question.

Such efforts to work toward a common understanding of the Scriptures make the NAPARC contacts of value for the future. The hardest questions I had to face at Grand Rapids came from an intelligent TV reporter. Why are these churches meeting together? What do they have in common? What steps will they be taking in these meetings toward union? When will they unite?

Three of the five NAPARC churches are now beginning to discuss the possibilities of union: the Presbyterian Church in America, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The OPC has recommended the inclusion of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the church supporting Geneva College). There is a twofold threat to a Biblical pattern of union. The first is a lack of urgency. While discussion proceeds at a leisurely pace—one or two committee meetings a year—the separate denominations proceed to harden denominational loyalty into sectarian denominationalism. R. B. Kuiper often said that the corruption of the best is the worst. It is frightening to see how love of one's own denominational communion, a beautiful thing, can turn into despising of other communions—an ugly thing. The other threat is the "ecclesiastical profile" approach to church union. It is one thing to ask if a church is true to the Word of God and the fullness of its teaching as summarized in the Reformed creeds. It is another thing to chart every mote in a brother's eye and keep a dossier on his failings. We cannot serve one another in either encouragement or reproof if we refuse the fellowship of the government Christ has appointed for his church.

NAPARC '78 is hardly a milestone toward the reforming and renewing of our churches. But it is at least a memorial of a time to begin and an opportunity to redeem.

The Christian Reformed Church *(continued from page 14)*

and study "to face the increasing number of problems that have arisen in the church with respect to the relationship of

some pastors and their congregations." The research is to be directed toward developing a healing ministry for crisis situations.

A study committee was appointed to determine the need of the severely mentally handicapped in the denomination. Due to the fact that Pine Rest Christian Hospital has discontinued this part of their program, many parents are seeking other solutions.

The 1978 Synod dealt with a variety of issues. Some decisions will have far-reaching effects. Other decisions will be debated for some time. It certainly was a history-making Synod. The labors of ten days of hard work and weeks of intense research by study committees are offered to the Lord for his blessing to build his Church. The Rev. Clarence Boomsma was the able chairman. He received the faithful support of the Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven as vice-president, the Rev. Howard Spaan as first clerk, and the Rev. Alvin Venema as second clerk.

The Presbyterian Church in America

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lain Doug McCullough. The Rev. Don Clements, currently a Navy chaplain, said, "We need a Reformed endorsing agency . . . the NAE can't understand the problems I have."

During the assembly, dignitaries from the Korean Presbyterian Church addressed their fellow presbyters through an interpreter.

Evaluation

There was boldness seen in several of the actions of the General Assembly, especially with regard to inter-church relations; urban, poor and minorities and diaconal ministries; and abortion. A certain amount of trepidation was evident with regard to not being able to motivate the people to give money, especially to MUS and CE/P, and the resulting impotence in those two areas.

Basically, it was an Assembly which was contented with the decisions it made. Even the commissioners who disagreed with a particular action, although concerned perhaps about ultimate implications of it, still knew that they were operating in an environment of God-

fearing men. Dr. James Kennedy, who had earlier reflected before the Assembly on his great joy at being there by saying, "I still don't know where the fight is!", conveyed that same sentiment in an interview when he said, "PCUS assemblies are like crossing the ocean in a storm, in a ship that's been torpedoed, the crew has mutinied, the captain is drunk, and they've abandoned the lifeboats. This assembly, by comparison, is like a cruise in the Caribbean."

The PCA is starting to be truly a nationally-based church, in terms of its outlook as much as its membership. As the moderator said, when he brought fraternal greetings after the joint worship service, the PCA meeting in Grand Rapids might indeed mean grits (which were all gone when the PCA-ers arrived that morning!) at breakfast, but it could no longer be thought of as "invasion" of Michigan.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church North America

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spiritual growth and in increased desire on the part of the faculty to integrate the Scriptures and learning. Some questions were raised about the Christian commitment and moral integrity of some who have received alumni awards from Geneva College, and that question was referred to the Board of Corporators of the College.

The Interchurch Correspondence and Study Committee recommended the adoption of a statement on ecclesiastical fellowship adopted by NAPARC and recommended to member churches be adopted. The recommendation was not accepted because of questions about "intercommunion." The RPCNA has recently moved from the practice of closed communion to session-controlled communion. Should members of the RPCNA feel free to participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper in other denominations? The whole matter was recommitted to the Interchurch Correspondence Committee for study. Serious questions were also raised about the continued membership of the RPCNA in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The RPCNA Synod voted to continue membership but with an eye of caution toward the theological

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trends in some of the RES member churches. In a significant action the Synod voted to set up a study committee to consider the theological and practical questions involved in steps toward church union.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (continued from page 9)

church but also the status of its denomination. On the same principles, the Commission indicated, a similar arrangement with a congregation of the United Presbyterian Church should not be approved.

Miscellaneous

Synod approved with little debate the

exploration of three-way merger talks with the OPC and the PCA, with the OPC discussions to proceed from the present stage if the three-way talks do not prove fruitful. The possibility of involvement with a publication to serve a larger presbyterian and reformed community is to be explored. Continuing study is being made of ways to utilize the gifts of retired persons in the work of the church. The responsibility and authority of ruling elders will continue to be studied at both the synod and local levels.

As usual, touches of humor were interjected from time to time, often relieving the tension of debate. Moderator Jones, who led the Synod with equanimity and dispatch despite some difficult parliamen-

tary questions, stated in one moment of temporary confusion: "It has been moved that the Committee be committed." Few agreed with this extreme solution. Similarly, a fraternal delegate from the CRC evoked laughter when he, not knowing that FOG is a commonly used acronym in the RPCES for its Form of Government, stated that we often continue to be divided on issues because "the fog gets in the way."

Overall, Synod seemed to be characterized by a more than ordinary sense of unity and determination to move forward in the purposes of the church. Despite differences, subjection to the Lord and the authority of His Word as a unifying principle is evident as the RPCES continues its work.

News and Views

Sandy Cove Conference

Some 200 people attended the Sandy Cove Family conference organized by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and held in Northeast Maryland from June 25 to July 2. Orthodox Presbyterians from Florida to New Jersey were joined by visitors from other churches.

Dr. John Skilton taught from the four gospels, providing insight into the cultural and historical background as well as challenging his hearers to assume per-

sonal responsibility to spread the good news. The Rev. Edward Kellogg led in a study of the fruit of the Spirit. In the evening sessions, the Rev. Donald Graham explored a variety of subjects relevant to the Christian life in our time. Topics included "worship and service," "discovering God's guidance," and "the responsibility of and for covenant youth."

A number of recreational activities, including a baby parade, were enjoyed by those present.

Westminster Alumni

During the June meeting of the General Assemblies and Synods of the NAPARC churches in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a meeting was arranged for alumni of Westminster Theological Seminary. More than one hundred graduates from the 1930s to the 1970s introduced themselves and spoke briefly of their present minis-

tries. Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, president of the seminary, gave an overview of recent developments at the seminary.

Anniversary Announcement

As children of Rev. and Mrs. John Verhage, 4755 E. Highline Place, Denver, Colorado 80222, we would like to share with the readers of *The Guardian* our joy and thankfulness to God in giving our dear parents 50 years of wedded life. They were married on August 28, 1928 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Thirty-three of these years have been in service to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Oostburg, Wisconsin, Grand Junction, Colorado and emeritus at Park Hill, Denver, Colorado.

Thankfully,
Dave and Evelyn Schaafsma
John and Alice De Haan
Bob and Elaine Morris

Contacts in Arizona

Families of Reformed Faith convictions who are moving to the Prescott, Arizona area will find like minds and fellowship with the Prescott Presbyterian Church in America. Providing a full ministry of preaching and teaching in the Reformed Faith. Write Pastor Charles E. Turner, P.O. Box 248, Prescott, AZ 86302. Ph. (602) 778-2538.

A Ministry in Memphis

Eastland Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Memphis, Tenn., desires to minister widely in the Mid-South area. Those moving to the area, or those temporarily in the area for medical or military reasons, are urged to contact the Rev. Robert L. Mabson (901-323-6578), or write to the church at 3741 Jackson Avenue, Memphis, TN 38108. Services are held each Sunday 11 a.m., 5:30 p.m., and Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Cover picture:

Dr. Clowney being interviewed for a local television station.

The PCA assembly in progress.

Photographs by the Rev. LeRoy B. Oliver and the Rev. Charles Coe