

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**MEETING AT
GLENSIDE, PENNSYLVANIA**

JUNE 5 - 10, 1961



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MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 5

Ruling Elder David L. Neilands, Moderator of the Twenty-seventh General Assembly, opened the Worship Service preceding the Twenty-eighth General Assembly at 8:00 o'clock, June 5, 1961, at Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Glenside, Pa. Mr. Neilands spoke on the theme: "God Delivers His People," basing his meditation on Exodus 40:17-38. The Rev. Edward J. Young administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, assisted by the Rev. Messrs. Jack J. Peterson and Robert H. Graham and by Ruling Elders Willard E. Neel, Lambert Van Eerden, Harry Greiner, and George E. Smith.

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 6

The Twenty-eighth General Assembly was called to order at 9:07 o'clock and was constituted with prayer by Mr. Neilands, following a devotional service at 8:40 o'clock led by the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas.

The roll of commissioners follows:

Presbytery of California

Ministers: Henry W. Coray, Edwards E. Elliott, Edward L. Kellogg, Paul M. Lovik, Robert E. Nicholas, Arthur O. Olson, Dwight H. Poundstone, Salvador M. Solis.

Ruling Elders: David L. Neilands, George E. Smith, Clarence P. Taylor.

Presbytery of the Dakotas

Ministers: Carl A. Ahlfeldt, Elmer M. Dortzbach, Jonathan D. Male, Russell D. Piper, Donald F. Stanton, Laurence N. Vail.

Presbytery of New Jersey

Ministers: W. Lee Benson, W. Harlee Bordeaux, Th.D., Calvin A. Busch, Thomas S. Champness, Jr., Leonard F. Chanoux, Ralph E. Clough, Edmund P. Clowney, Raymond E. Commeret, John Davies, Everett C. DeVelde, Leslie A. Dunn, Meredith G. Kline, Ph.D., Le Roy B. Oliver, Jack J. Peterson, Arthur B. Spooner.

Ruling Elders: Richard A. Barker, Floyd C. Graf, Garret A. Hoogerhyde, Paul S. MacDonald, Ernest J. Muller, Malcolm L. Woodruff; *alternate*: Edward A. Haug, Jr.

Presbytery of New York and New England

Ministers: Herbert V. G. DuMont, Theodore J. Georgian, Burton L. Goddard, Th.D., John C. Hills, Jr., Ronald E. Jenkins, Raymond M. Mciners, John Murray, Charles G. Schauffele, Laurence C. Sibley, Jr., John H. Skilton, Ph.D., G. I. Williamson, George J. Willis.

Ruling Elders: Charles A. Embrey, John Garland.

Presbytery of Ohio

Ministers: Calvin K. Cummings, Arnold S. Kress, Thomas E. Tyson, William Young, Th.D., B.Litt. (Oxon.).

Ruling Elders: J. E. Atwell, John C. Smith.

Presbytery of Philadelphia

Ministers: Robert L. Atwell, Lester R. Bachman, Robert W. Eckardt, Charles H. Ellis, F. Clarke Evans, Henry H. Fikkert, John P. Galbraith, Robert H. Graham, Robley J. Johnston, George W. Knight, III, Robert D. Knudsen, Ph.D., Arthur W. Kuschke, Jr., Luther Craig Long, Ph.D., John J. Mitchell, William J. Rankin, Cromwell G. Roskamp, Leslie W. Sloat, Ned B. Stonehouse, Th.D.,

At the request of the Moderator, Mr. Chanoux assumed the chair.

Mr. Clowney, a member of the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government and Book of Discipline, presented the report of the Committee as follows:

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REVISIONS TO THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

The Twenty-seventh General Assembly requested this committee "to give consideration, with a view to possible revision of the Form of Government, to the matter of the propriety of ministers retaining their ministerial status while not actively engaged in the ministerial calling, and to report with recommendations to the Twenty-eighth General Assembly."

Since the ordination vows of a minister of the gospel include his promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all the duties of this office (FG XV:12:7), inactivity in the ministerial calling may require discipline. The Book of Discipline should therefore deal with this matter.

The Committee therefore proposes that, in accordance with the provisions of the Form of Government, Chapter XXVI, section 1, the Book of Discipline, Chapter VI, section 4, be amended by the addition of the following paragraph:

When a minister, not retired because of age or physical disability, ceases to exercise the office of the ministry or enters upon full-time secular employment, he may be deemed, after two years, to have left the ministry. When such dereliction appears to have occurred, the presbytery shall immediately make a full investigation of the circumstances. Should it appear that his neglect of the office proceeds from a lack of the requisite gifts and his consequent want of acceptance to the church, his ordination shall be withdrawn. He remains a communicant member of the church, and the presbytery may issue him a letter to the particular church with which he desires to connect himself. Mature consideration is necessary in all such cases. Limited secular employment may in unusual circumstances serve the minister's calling; on the other hand entanglement in the affairs of this life may reveal not a lack of ministerial gifts but a failure in their exercise, for which the remedy is fraternal admonition and discipline.

The Committee respectfully submits a Second Revised Version of Chapter I-IX of a Form of Government to be substituted for Chapters I-VII of the Revised Version submitted to the Twenty-second General Assembly and recommends that the Version of Chapters I-IX be submitted to the presbyteries and sessions for study. A minority report submitted by the Rev. Edmund P. Clowney is appended to this report.

The Committee recommends that the existing Committee be continued.

CHAPTER I

Of Christ, the King and Head of the Church

1. Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even forever, having all power given unto him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all; he being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his church and gave offices necessary for the building of his church, for making disciples of all nations and perfecting his saints.

2. There is therefore but one King and Head of the church, the only Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, who rules in his church by his Word and Spirit. His ministerial office includes all the offices in his church. It belongs to his majesty from his throne of glory not only to rule his church directly but also to use the ministry of men in ruling and teaching his church through his Word and Spirit, thus exercising through men his own authority and enforcing his own laws. The authority of all such ministerial office rests upon his appointment, who has ordained government in his church, revealed its nature to us in his Word, and promised his presence in the midst of his church as this government is exercised in his name.

3. Since Christ orders his church by the rule of his Word, the form of church government must rest upon the authority of Scripture alone. While not every circumstance concerning church government is specified in Scripture, nevertheless in all circumstances the general rules of the Word must be observed. Moreover, the whole pattern of officers, ordinances, government and discipline appointed in the Word must be obeyed as the commandment of the Lord to which nothing is to be added and from which nothing is to be taken away. Although presbyterian government is not essential to the existence of the church visible, yet it is the form of government taught in Scripture and it is necessary to the perfection of the order of the church.

4. Jesus Christ, having ascended into heaven, abides in his church by the Holy Spirit whom he has sent. Through his Spirit he has given his Word revealing his ordinances; through the Spirit also he exerts his saving and governing power in the teaching of his Word and the administration of his ordinances. Only by the gifts and calling of the Spirit are men endued and qualified for office in Christ's church.

CHAPTER II *Of the Church*

1. The universal or catholic church on earth consists of all those persons, in every nation, who have been united to Christ and are members of his body.

2. The Lord alone knows infallibly those who are his, but all those who profess the true religion and their children are to be regarded as members of the church and therefore are subject to the government which Christ has vested in the church.

3. The vast numbers of members of the church of the new covenant are organized in many local congregations or particular churches according to the warrant of Scripture.

4. Each particular church under the new covenant consists of a number of believers and their children associated together in a given locality, in accordance with Christ's institution, and in his fellowship for divine worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness; and submitting to a certain form of church government.

CHAPTER III *Of the Nature and Exercise of Church Power*

1. The power which Christ has committed to his church is not vested in the special officers alone, but in the whole body. All believers are endued with the Spirit and called of Christ to join in the worship, edification, and witness of the church which grows as the body of Christ fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part. This power, as exercised by believers in their general office, extends to the recognition of the gifts and calling of special office-bearers in the church so that the regular exercise of oversight in a particular congregation is discharged by those whose gifts and calling have been acknowledged and their exercise desired by vote of the people.

2. Those who join in exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction are the ministers of the Word or teaching elders, and other church governors, commonly called ruling elders. Since, according to the New Testament, these are the only permanent officers of the church with gifts for such rule, they alone must exercise this authority, by delegation from Christ. Ruling elders and teaching elders join in congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies, for those who share gifts for rule from Christ must exercise these gifts jointly not only in the fellowship of the saints in one place but for the edification of all the saints in larger areas so far as they are appointed thereunto in an orderly manner, and are acknowledged by the saints as those set over them in the Lord.

Government by presbyters or elders is a new Testament ordinance; their joint exercise of jurisdiction in presbyterial assemblies is set forth in the New Testament; and the organization of subordinate and superior courts is founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, expressing the unity of the church and the derivation of ministerial authority from Christ the Head of the church.

3. All church power is only ministerial and declarative, for the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and manners. No church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of its own authority; all its decisions should be founded upon the Word of God. "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship."

4. Further, all church power is wholly moral or spiritual. No church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction; they may not inflict any civil penalties nor may they seek the aid of the civil power in the exercise of their jurisdiction further than may be necessary for civil protection and security.

Nevertheless, the power of church government, as appointed by the Lord Jesus as King and Head of his church, in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate, is a valid and authentic jurisdiction to which Christians are commanded to submit themselves. "To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require."

Therefore the decrees and determinations of church officers when properly rendered and if consonant to the Word of God "are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his Word."

CHAPTER IV

Of the Unity of the Church

1. Since the church of Christ is one body, united under and in one God and Father, one Lord, and one Spirit, it must give diligence to keep this unity in the bond of peace. To this end the church must receive those endued with gifts of Christ as Christ himself, must submit to those whose call to govern in the church has been properly acknowledged, and in particular must learn of those with gifts of teaching the Word of God. Further, since every Christian is endued with some gift for the edification of the body, he must minister this gift to the church as a faithful steward. Church government must maintain this fellowship in Christ and in the gifts of the Spirit and seek its restoration when it has been disrupted through schism.

2. It is the right and duty of those who rule in the church of God to maintain order and exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and duty. It is incumbent upon

these officers and upon the whole church to censure or cast out the erroneous or scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God, and seeking the honor of Christ's name, the good of his church, and the reclamation of the offender.

3. The manifestation of the unity of the church requires that it be separate from the world. Apostasy in faith and life is destructive of the fellowship in Christ; only by rejecting such error can Christian fellowship be maintained. There are many antichrists, many false apostles and teachers. From these the church must turn away, and those who steadfastly hear the voice of false shepherds and follow them cannot be regarded as the sheep of Christ. There are organizations which falsely call themselves churches of God, and others which once were churches, but have become synagogues of Satan. Communion with such is spiritual adultery and an offense against Christ and his saints.

4. The visible unity of the body of Christ, though not altogether destroyed, is greatly obscured by the division of the Christian church into different groups or denominations of Christians who exercise a fellowship toward each other in doctrine, worship, and order which they do not exercise toward others. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have gravely departed from apostolic purity; yet all of these which maintain through a sufficient discipline the Word and sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true manifestations of the church of Jesus Christ. With all such we seek a closer fellowship, in accordance with the principles set forth above.

CHAPTER V

Of the Officers of the Church

1. Our blessed Lord established his church of the new covenant upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, whom he called and endued as extraordinary officers with miraculous gifts. The foundational purpose of such has been fulfilled and the offices and their peculiar gifts have long since ceased.

2. The ordinary and perpetual officers of the church may be classified under two heads, as elders and deacons; or under three heads, as ministers (teaching elders), ruling elders, and deacons.

3. Elders, also called bishops, are charged with the oversight of the church. The New Testament, however, distinguishes between those whose oversight is particularly that of ruling and those whose special charge is labor in the Word and teaching. The latter may therefore be called teaching elders to distinguish them from ruling elders, but they are more commonly called ministers of the Word.

CHAPTER VI

Of Ministers or Teaching Elders

1. The ministry of the Word is a calling of God to stewardship in the gospel and is characterized by a diversity of gifts which are essential to the discharge of pastoral, teaching, and evangelistic functions. Every minister of the gospel must manifest his gifts and calling in these various aspects of labor in the Word, seeking the profit of those with whom he labors by a full exercise of his ministry. However, within the stewardship of the gospel the Scripture distinguishes the work of the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher.

2. A teaching elder, in whatever capacity he is called to serve, shall be a member of a particular congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. If he is a pastor of an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation he shall be a member in that congregation. If he is not a pastor of an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation his membership may be in any congregation under the jurisdiction of that Presbytery in which he shall exercise presbyterial functions. As a member of a particular congregation the teaching elder is entitled

to all the privileges which belong to other communicant members and is subject to the jurisdiction of the session in all matters which concern his membership in the congregation. If he is not a pastor he may be elected by the congregation to perform the functions of ruling elder as a member of the session of that particular congregation.

CHAPTER VII

Of Evangelists

1. Jesus Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth, has commanded his church to make disciples of all the nations. From the throne of his glory he sent forth the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, to empower the witness of the church to the gospel. It is the calling of every believer to confess Christ before men, and in particular, those who have the gift and calling of Christ to preach the Word are made ambassadors of God through whom Christ preaches the gospel of peace to men far and near. But while every minister of the Word must evangelize in the fulfillment of his calling, some are particularly called by Christ and his church as evangelists. Such men may be free of pastoral charge in a particular flock in order that they may labor to bring in other sheep. They are called evangelists in the New Testament in distinction from pastors and teachers, and since their gift and function are necessary in the church until the end of the age, this ministry is permanent and not confined to the apostolic period.

2. The evangelist, in common with other ministers, is ordained to preach the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to perform the other functions that belong to the sacred office of the minister. Among the distinctive functions which the evangelist may properly perform are: (a) the ministry of the gospel in home or foreign mission fields; (b) the ministry of the gospel as stated supply or special preacher in churches to which he does not sustain a pastoral relation; (c) the ministry of the gospel as chaplain in institutions or in military forces; (d) the ministry of the gospel in an administrative capacity; and (e) the ministry of the gospel through the press or other means of communication.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Pastors

The pastor is an ordinary and perpetual officer in the church. His specific charge is to feed and tend the flock as an undershepherd of Christ in a particular church. It belongs to his office to conduct the public worship of God; to pray for and with his flock as the mouth of the people unto God; to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved of God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to shepherd the flock and minister the Word according to the particular needs of groups, families, and individuals in the congregation, catechizing by teaching plainly the first principles of the oracles of God to the baptized youth and to adults who are yet babes in Christ, visiting in the homes of the people, instructing and counseling individuals; to minister to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; to make known the gospel to the lost; and to exercise the power of government in pastoral stewardship and in the judicatories of the church.

CHAPTER IX

Of Teachers

Scripture speaks also of the teacher, who is a minister of the Word as well as the pastor, and has power of administration of the sacraments and to take part in the government of the church.

Since the Lord has given different gifts, and differing functions according to these gifts in the ministry of the Word, he that excels in exposition of the Scriptures, in teach-

ing sound doctrine, and in convincing gainsayers, and is accordingly employed therein, may be called a teacher, or doctor.

The teacher may serve a particular congregation in this function where there is at least one other minister serving as pastor. Nevertheless, where there is but one minister in a particular congregation, he is to perform so far as he is able the whole work of the ministry.

The teacher may also give instruction in a theological seminary; or teach the Word in a school, college, or university; or discharge this ministry in some other specific way, such as writing or editing in the field of Christian religious education. It appertains to his office to take a pastoral oversight of those committed to his charge as teacher, and to be diligent in sowing the seed of the Word and gathering the fruit thereof, as one who watches for souls.

On behalf of the Committee,
Respectfully submitted,
John Murray, Chairman

In the course of the reading of the report, the Moderator resumed the chair.

The tellers reported the election of Messrs. Roberts and Colsman to the class of 1964 of the Committee on Pensions.

By unanimous consent the Rev. Wilbur W. Blakely was invited to address the Assembly at 10:45 a.m. today.

The order of the day having arrived, Mr. Blakely addressed the Assembly. Mr. Cummings responded for the Assembly.

Mr. Clelland presented a report of the Committee on Travel Fund as follows: The Committee recommends that commissioners who have submitted vouchers be compensated at the rate of five cents per mile above 850 miles travelled round trip, with the understanding that the Committee be allowed to make minor adjustments above or below the 850 mile figure. It was moved to adopt the recommendation. The motion to put the previous question was carried. The motion to adopt the recommendation was carried.

On motion it was determined that this Assembly propose to the presbyteries in accordance with the provisions of the Form of Government, Chapter XXVI, Section 1, that the Book of Discipline, Chapter VI, Section 4, be amended in accordance with the recommendation of the report of the Committee (as amended by the Assembly). As amended by the Assembly, the proposed addition to the Book of Discipline, Chapter VI, Section 4, is as follows: When a minister, not retired because of age or physical disability, ceases to exercise the office of the ministry or enters upon full-time secular employment, for a period of two years, the presbytery shall at the expiration of that period make a full investigation of the circumstances. Should it become clear that his neglect of the office proceeds from a lack of the requisite gifts and his consequent want of acceptance to the church, his ordination shall be withdrawn. He remains a communicant member of the church, and the presbytery may issue him a certificate of dismission to the particular church which he desires to connect himself. Mature consideration is necessary in all cases. Secular employment may in unusual circumstances serve the minister's calling; on the other hand entanglement in the affairs of this life may reveal not a lack of ministerial gifts but a failure in their exercise, for which the remedy is fraternal admonition and discipline.

Mr. Clowney presented the report of the minority of the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government and Book of Discipline as follows:

MINORITY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REVISIONS TO THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

The minority concurs with the majority report with the following exceptions (references are to chapter and section):