

Report of the Sub-committee on Study of Delegated General Assemblies  
to the Committee on Administration  
January 9, 1981

It appears that the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) will exceed the 500 mark in the number of congregations during the year of 1981. This is the target figure that previous Assemblies have set for consideration of a delegated Assembly. That this is wise is seen in the increasing size of the recent Assemblies, and also the disproportionate numbers of Ruling and Teaching Elders. It is evident that we do now need to settle on a plan for delegated Assemblies. It is no longer so much a question of whether we should have delegated Assemblies but rather how we should do it.

The Stated Clerk has, at the direction of the Committee, taken a survey of those churches that failed to have Ruling Elders at the last Assembly. Letters were sent to 142 churches, from whom we have received 79 replies. A self addressed post card was used giving three standard answers, and an additional space for other reasons. Even where other reasons have been stated, they tend to fall into one of the three categories. Some of the churches have answered more than one reason, and have been counted in each, thus the count does not total only 78. The results of the survey are as follows: 23 churches indicated financial reasons for not sending Ruling Elders; 60 indicated no elder was available, and 9 indicated lack of interest in then General Assembly. As your Sub-committed has studied this matter, it seems evident that under our present system, which requires the individual congregations to pay the expenses of their commissioners, there is little prospect of the situation improving. The fact is that as the church spreads across the whole country, the situation is likely to deteriorate, instead of improving or even holding the present level. For these reasons, the Sub-committee believes that it is time for us to face the issue, and settle on the most satisfactory plan of having delegated Assemblies. Even if we start now, the earliest that such a plan could be implemented is for the 1983 General Assembly. With the possible prospect of the reception of other denominations into the PCA, the urgency for action now is more apparent.

The Sub-committee has also studied the matter of how other denominations arrange the delegation to their Assemblies. There is a great variety of practice. For example, the Christian Reformed Church has four teaching elders and four ruling elders from each classis or presbytery, regardless of size. This makes for a small Synod, in which there is great freedom of discussion and debate. The Presbyterian Church in the United States has one teaching and one ruling elder from each Presbytery, with additional representatives on the basis of the size of the presbyteries. It is of interest to note that they have in attendance an equal number of each class of elder.

It has been proposed that we allow only one half of the congregations of each presbytery to send ruling elders, and that the presbytery elect from its ministers an equal number of teaching elders. This might appear to be the simplest procedure for us, but it will not change the situation of the small churches that are not willing or not able to send a ruling elder. There would

still exist a disproportionate number of teaching and ruling elders, though presumably it would not be as much as the present system generates. Another problem with this system is that it keeps the representation from the congregations and not from the presbyteries. Your Sub-committee feels that this is not really true to the genius of the presbyterian system, which is a representative system. In other words, if the Assembly is made up of delegates from the presbyteries, then the presbyteries should be the bodies that elect their representatives, and not the congregations. It should be noted that this a weakness of our present system as well.

Your Sub-committee feels that we should go to a true representative system, with the presbyteries electing both the ruling and teaching elder delegates. In some ways, we favor the Christian Reformed idea of equal representation from each presbytery regardless of size, but we doubt that such a proposal would be acceptable to our people at this time.

If we were to use the system of the PCUS, with each presbytery having one and one, to which additional representatives are added according to the size of the presbytery, a wide disproportion could exist. This is due to the wide disparity between the sizes of our presbyteries. The Sub-committee suggests that a better balance can be obtained with a formula such as the following: each presbytery to send two ruling and two teaching elders, with one additional ruling and teaching elder for each 1,000 or part thereof above 4,000 communicant members. On the basis of the 1979 Yearbook figures this would result in an Assembly of 232 members with the following presbyteries having additional members as indicated:

|           |       |       |
|-----------|-------|-------|
| Calvary   | 4     | 4     |
| Evangel   | 5     | 5     |
| MS Valley | 3     | 3     |
| So FL     | 8     | 8     |
|           | <hr/> | <hr/> |
|           | 20    | 20    |

If the optimum figure for Assembly size could be agreed upon, then the Book of Church Order could be amended to provide for an Assembly of approximately this size, using a basic formula of at least 2 and 2 from each presbytery, and allowing fluctuation on the number at which additions are permitted, so as to provide an Assembly approximately the size specified.

If the number were set around 300, then the Assembly could pay the expenses of all delegates, without it becoming an astronomical figure. This would give some control on early departures from the Assembly. Expense money could be withheld from those who do not attend the full Assembly, or it could be reduced on a set schedule for those who leave early without a legitimate excuse, to be approved by a committee on excuses.

On the basis of the above reasoning, the Sub-committee recommends that the Committee on Administration present to the Ninth General Assembly a proposal that it adopt an amendment to the Book of Church Order, which would set the approximate size of the Assembly at 300, with each presbytery having at least two ruling and two teaching elder representatives. Additional representatives from larger presbyteries to bring the size of the Assembly to approximately 300 to be determined by a formula to be set annually by the Committee on Administration. The Assembly would assume the financial expenses of its Commissioners.

The Sub-committee recommends that the Committee on Administration propose to the Assembly the adoption of a representative Assembly, and that in order to implement this, the following amendments be made to the Book of Church Order:

Amend paragraph 14-2 by substituting the following for the whole:

"The General Assembly, which is a permanent court, shall meet at least annually upon its own adjournment. Each presbytery shall be represented by at least two ruling and two teaching elders, with additional representatives being allowed to the larger presbyteries according to a formula set annually by the Committee on Administration to provide for an Assembly of approximately 300 commissioners."

Amend paragraph 10-6 by adding the following to the present sentence:

", except that the General Assembly pays the expenses of its commissioners according to a formula set annually by the Committee on Administration."

Respectfully submitted,

Sub-committee to Study Delegated  
General Assemblies

William F. Joseph  
Morton H. Smith

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Ninth 1981 501 353 706 243 21.430 673  
 Tenth 1982 546  
 + 87  
 733

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION  
 TO THE NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
 OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

Since the duties of the Committee on Administration cover various areas of the Church's life, this report will be composed of separate narrative sections in each area of responsibility. The recommendations are all presented at the end of the report.

The Committee held three meetings during the year: September 19-20, 1980; January 9-10, 1981; March 13-14, 1981; with one scheduled at the time of the General Assembly.

I. ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

The Eighth General Assembly voted that the 1982 General Assembly be held in Grand Rapids. The Christian Reformed Church General Synod is being held June 8-18, 1982.

II. JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE FOUR MAJOR COMMITTEES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The growth of the Committees over time has created some possible ambiguities in the understanding of the tasks of the various Committees. Perhaps the time has come for a thorough discussion of the role of each Committee.

Buried in this discussion is the age-old dilemma of the freedoms of the decentralization versus the efficiencies of centralization. Every large organization (business, government, or church) struggles with this dilemma and finds no simple answer.

Examples of how this dilemma affects the Presbyterian Church in America are:

1. Should each Committee be free to pursue its own ideas regarding computers, or should there be integrated planning? At the present time, no single authority exists in the Assembly; each Committee is free to pursue its own objective without considering the need of the other Committees.

The 1981 budgets for computers are:

|                                  |                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Committee on Administration      | \$8,000         |
| Christian Education/Publications | \$12,000        |
| Mission to the United States     | \$12,000        |
| Mission to the World             | \$22,660        |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>\$54,660</b> |

In addition, there are costs for computerized mailing lists which are not included in the above.

2. Should each Committee continue to rent space separately, or should the denomination rent corporately? Should we purchase a building? Who has the right to make this decision?

3. Should the various Committees of the denomination have the common policy regarding pay and fringe benefits of its personnel?

III. THE QUESTION OF DELEGATED ASSEMBLIES

The Eighth General Assembly authorized the Committee on Administration to reopen the question of delegated Assemblies (MBCA, p.121, par. 8-103, 111, 3). The Committee made a study of the attendance at the Eighth General Assembly. A total of 132 churches had no ruling elder representation. These were surveyed with a response received from 79 of the churches, or 56%. Of these 23 indicated financial inability, 60 that no ruling elder was available, and 9 a lack of interest. (Note: some churches listed more than one reason for non-attendance, and are counted more than once in the above tabulation.) It appears from this that a number of our churches suffer from two primary problems in Assembly attendance, namely, a financial burden, and a lack of the availability of men. It is unlikely that either of these problems will be overcome under the present system.

The following is a tabulation of teaching and ruling elder attendance for all of the PCA General Assembly meetings:

| General Assembly | Possible Churches | Churches Represented | Ruling Elders | Teaching Elders | Total Enrollment |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| First            | 260               | 215                  | 179           | 208             | 387              |
| Second           | 300(est)          | 255                  | 219           | 246             | 465              |
| Third            | 346               | 294                  | 259           | 284             | 543              |
| Fourth           | 393               | 305                  | 265           | 325             | 590              |
| Fifth            | 405               | 319                  | 247           | 367             | 614              |
| Sixth            | 428               | 295                  | 216           | 353             | 569              |
| Seventh          | 440               | 350                  | 260           | 421             | 681              |
| Eighth           | 474               | 367                  | 247           | 413             | 660              |

Further, the size of our Assemblies militate against it acting as a good deliberative body. It should be noted that none of our states have more than 150 in their legislatures, and that the House of Representatives has a set number of 435 while the Senate has only 100.

In the light of the above it seems to the Committee on Administration desirable for the General Assembly to move to a delegated Assembly as early as possible. This could not be accomplished before 1983.

A delegated Assembly will provide for equality of teaching and ruling elder representation. A delegated Assembly will reduce the total cost of the Assembly, both as to individual delegate expense and the General Assembly expense. A delegated Assembly will provide for the opportunity for better participation by all in attendance.

It has been proposed that we allow only one half of the congregations of each presbytery to send ruling elders, and that the presbytery elect from its ministers an equal number of teaching elders. This might appear to be the simplest procedure for us, but it will not change the situation of the small churches that are not willing or not able to send a ruling elder. There would still exist a disproportionate number of teaching and ruling elders, though presumably it would not be as much as the present system generates. Another problem with this proposal is that it keeps the representation from the congregations and not from the presbyteries. The Committee on Administration feels that this is not really true to the genius of Presbyterianism, which is a representative system. In other words, if the Assembly is made up of delegates from the presbyteries, then the presbyteries should be the bodies that elect their representatives, and not the congregations. It should be noted that this is a weakness of our present system as well.

It is for the above reasons that the Committee will make a recommendation proposing a change in the Book of Church Order, which will move us to a delegated Assembly if enacted.

IV. OFFICE OPERATION

The Committee through sub-committees examined the work of both of the offices of the Stated Clerk and the Business Administrator, and is satisfied with both of these offices for the present. The Committee will recommend that both the present Stated Clerk and Business Administrator be continued. The Committee intends to continue this practice periodically in the future.

V. ASSEMBLY OPERATIONS

The Committee was directed by the Eighth General Assembly to "devise a plan whereby a committee of commissioners report, when all of the arguments have been heard, shall be approved as a whole, pending approval of other enabling committee reports, such as, stewardship." The Committee has a proposal for changing the Rules for Assembly Operation to cover this matter.

VI. REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

As the Church continues to grow the workload of the office of the Stated Clerk continues to increase. The office has been able to continue to keep up with this load with the addition of some part-time help, and a purchase of word processing equipment during the year. Much time has been spent during this year in shifting to the use of this new equipment. In addition to the regular duties of the Stated Clerk, he has been involved in assisting the Ad-Interim Committee dealing with the Interchurch matters in preparing its materials for the use of the Assembly. He has also been used by the Committee on Mission to the United States to assist in the examination of churches in the South Dakota area. The 1980 statistics show a total of 80,211 communicant members, 10,780 non-communicant members, 728 ministers, 91,719 total number of members, and 487 churches.

The Clerk's office continues to be the depository for the historical records of the Church. A number of churches are sending local church histories on an annual basis, as well as weekly bulletins and newsletters. The churches at large should be encouraged to continue in this practice. Provision is being made in the new Ridge Haven Inn for space for the beginning of the historical collection of the denomination. All of the Committees should be

reminded of the fact that previous Assemblies have directed that all materials should be preserved, and materials five years old or older should eventually be placed in the historical collection.

The Eighth General Assembly assigned to the Clerk's Office the task of preparing and publishing a Digest of the Assembly's Minutes. To date much of this material has been compiled, but there has not been time for the actual preparation for printing. It is hoped that during this next year this can be completed, and the Digest can be published. A special budget item was allocated by the Eighth General Assembly for the publication of this work in 1981. In the event that this work cannot be completed during the calendar year of 1981, it may be necessary for the Assembly to authorize this budget item of \$10,000 to be carried over into the next calendar year.

#### VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Tenth General Assembly be held at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on June 14-18, 1982, with the Committees of Commissioners beginning on June 12, or as called by the respective conveners.
2. That the General Assembly authorize the Committee on Administration, in consultation with each Permanent Committee of the General Assembly to review and evaluate the Assembly organizational structure, and interrelationships of the Permanent Committees, identify areas of duplication, ambiguity, competition in Committee assignments and responsibilities, suggest appropriate revisions, and report the same to the Tenth General Assembly.
3. That the General Assembly decide to move to a representative or delegated Assembly and that the following Book of Church Order amendments, which would provide for such representation be adopted and sent down to the presbyteries for their advice and consent:

Amend the BCO, par. 14-2, by substituting the following for whole:

"The General Assembly, which is a permanent court of the Church, shall meet at least annually upon its own adjournment. The Assembly shall consist of not more than 300 voting commissioners (150 teaching elders and 150 ruling elders), who shall represent their respective presbyteries in accordance with an apportionment set by the previous General Assembly. In the event that additional presbyteries are received after this proportion has been set, their representatives shall be allocated on the same formula used to set the original apportionment. These additional representatives may be duly enrolled by the Assembly at its opening session. In the event that an Assembly fails to set the apportionment for the next Assembly, the same formula used for the previous Assembly will be used."

4. That the Rules for Assembly Operations be amended as follows:
  - a. Amend Item 10-3 by adding:
 

"(5) When it is necessary to postpone action on the completion of a report for some subsequent action of the Assembly, such as the approval of the budgets, or other special items, the report shall be approved as a whole pending the completion of these other items. At the time that the other items come to the floor, only these matters may be considered by the Assembly, since the report as a whole will have already been adopted."
  - b. Amend Item 11 by adding a new Item 11 as follows, the present 11 to become Item 12:

#### \*XI. ELECTION OF PERMANENT COMMITTEES AND AGENCIES OF THE ASSEMBLY

11-1. The Assembly's Nominating Committee as provided for in BCO, 14-1, shall present its nominations to the Assembly through the Commissioners Handbook or Supplement. This presentation shall include a brief statement regarding each nominee.

11-2. Additional nominations may be made in writing on forms supplied by the Stated Clerk, which shall include consent of the nominee to serve, if elected, and a brief statement regarding the nominee. The nominee is to give consent to only one nomination. The deadlines for these nominations is the close of the afternoon session of the second day of the Assembly. The Clerk's office shall issue a supplement to the Assembly's Nominating report during the third day's business sessions.

11-3. The time for the election shall be docketed as a special order. Only those commissioners present or on the floor of the Assembly shall be eligible to vote. The voting procedures may be conducted either by use of standing vote, or by use of ballots provided by the Stated Clerk's office.

5. Proposed Amendments to the Bylaws of the Presbyterian Church in America (A Corporation)
  - a. Amend Article 2, Section 1, Line 7, the BCO 14-2 instead of 15-2.
  - b. Amend Article 3, Section 3, reference to the BCO 14-3 instead of 15-3.
  - c. Amend Article 2, Section 4, reference to the BCO 14-5 instead of 15-5.
  - d. Amend Article 4, Section 10, title line the Sub-Committee on Stewardship Ministries
  - e. Amend Article 4, Section 9 F by adding the following new paragraphs:
 

"The membership of other permanent committees, sub-committees, boards or agencies shall be limited to the same constitutional provisions (BCO 14-1-12) as those of the permanent committees: to wit, that those who have served for at least a full term, or at least two years of a partial term on one of the Assembly's permanent committees, or permanent sub-committees, or other agencies shall not be eligible for reelection to an Assembly committee or agency until one year has elapsed. Nominations shall be handled according to the BCO 14-2-11.

"No individual shall serve on more than one Assembly committee, sub-committee, board or agency at one time. Employees of the Assembly's committees, or agencies are not eligible for office on an Assembly committee, sub-committee, board or agency, unless the description of the committee calls for some particular office holder to serve, either as an ex-officio or an advisory member."
  - f. Amend Article 4, Section 9 by adding new Item G, entitled, "Boards":
 

"When it is necessary for the handling of civil matters for the Assembly to authorize one of its committees, subcommittees, or agencies to incorporate and to form a board, the relationship of the board to the Assembly remains as a committee or sub-committee, and the provision of the corporation charter and bylaws shall be in conformity with the constitution of the Church. The rules for membership and election of these boards shall be the same as provided for in the BCO 14-1, except that number of classes and lengths of terms may vary."
  - g. Amend Article 4, Section 9 by adding Section H: "Exceptions": "The Assembly has the authority to make exceptions to the above guidelines for those sub-committees or agencies not specifically covered by the BCO, by making amendment to these bylaws spelling out the specific exceptions, as well as approving corporation bylaws in conformity with these exceptions."
6. That our present Stated Clerk be employed through the 1982 General Assembly.
7. That our present Business Administrator be employed through the 1982 General Assembly.
8. That if the Stated Clerk's Office is not able to publish the Digest of the Minutes during the calendar year of 1981, the special allocation of \$10,000 be carried over in the 1982 budget.
9. That the budget for the Committee on Administration as presented by the Stewardship Committee be adopted.

## Several Formulae for Representative General Assemblies

### 1. Established Size for the Assembly

If the size of the Assembly is established as is the case with the Congress of the United States and most Houses of the State Legislatures, the formula may be established along the following lines:

1. Each Presbytery will have at least one teaching and one ruling elder representative.
2. The percentage size of the presbytery is then computed on the basis of the total number of communicants in the presbytery as compared with the total number of communicants in the Assembly.
3. Using these computed percentages, each presbytery with greater than 1% is allotted the number of ruling and teaching elders represented by the whole number portion of their percentage figure. Those presbyteries with less than a 1% figure, will be allotted one ruling and one teaching elder. These presbyteries will not be considered for additional allotments.

Having thus established the preliminary allotment, the remaining portion of the percentage figures are then set in descending numerical order, and additional representatives are allotted in descending order, until the whole number has been reached. The following chart indicates how this would work for the 1982 Assembly as based on the 1980 figures. It will be necessary to use the figures from the previous year, so that Presbyteries will have sufficient time to elect the proper number. The allocations could be announced at one Assembly for the next.

A Chart Showing How the Above System Operates for an  
Assembly of Three Hundred Commissioners

| Presbyteries   | 1980<br>Communicants | Percentage | Order of Major Assignment of<br>Fraction | Representation |
|----------------|----------------------|------------|--|----------------|
| Ascension      | 2,022                | 2.517      | 10                                       | 5 and 5        |
| Calvary        | 8,409                | 10.469     | 11                                       | 13 and 13      |
| Cent. Carolina | 1,570                | 1.955      | 4  | 4 and 4        |
| Cent. Florida  | 1,030                | 1.282      | 16                                       | 4 and 4        |
| Cent. Georgia  | 4,005                | 4.986      | 2  | 7 and 7        |
| Covenant       | 2,207                | 2.748      | 6  | 5 and 5        |
| East. Carolina | 1,449                | 1.804      | 5  | 4 and 4        |
| Evangel        | 9,612                | 11.967     | 3  | 14 and 14      |
| Grace          | 4,151                | 5.168      | 21                                       | 7 and 7        |
| Gulf Coast     | 2,612                | 3.252      | 14                                       | 6 and 6        |
| Louisiana      | 992                  | 1.235      | 19                                       | 3 and 3        |
| Mid-Atlantic   | 4,351                | 5.417      | 15                                       | 8 and 8        |
| Miss. Valley   | 7,552                | 9.403      | 17                                       | 11 and 11      |
| New River      | 897                  | 1.117      | 23                                       | 3 and 3        |
| North Georgia  | 2,111                | 2.628      | 9  | 5 and 5        |
| Pacific        | 968                  | 1,205      | 20                                       | 3 and 3        |
| Philadelphia   | 936                  | 1.165      | 22                                       | 3 and 3        |
| South. Florida | 14,258               | 17.751     | 7  | 20 and 20      |
| Southwest      | 368                  | .458       | 12                                       | 1 and 1        |
| Tenn. Valley   | 4,102                | 5.107      | 24                                       | 7 and 7        |
| Texas          | 1,602                | 1.995      | 1  | 4 and 4        |
| Warrior        | 1,812                | 2.256      | 18                                       | 4 and 4        |
| West. Carolina | 1,335                | 1.662      | 8  | 4 and 4        |
| Westminster    | 1,967                | 2.449      | 13                                       | 5 and 5        |
| Total          | 80,319               |            |  | 150 and 150    |

A Chart Showing How the Representation Based on Number  
of Communicant Members Operates

| Presbyteries   | 1980<br>Communicants | Every Presbytery<br>Allotment | Additions for<br>Every 1,000 | Additions for<br>Every 2,000 |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ascension      | 2,022                | 1 and 1                       | 2 and 2 = 6                  | 1 and 1 = 4                  |
| Calvary        | 8,409                | 1 and 1                       | 8 and 8 = 18                 | 4 and 4 = 10                 |
| Cent. Carolina | 1,570                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| Cent. Florida  | 1,030                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| Cent. Georgia  | 4,005                | 1 and 1                       | 4 and 4 = 10                 | 2 and 2 = 6                  |
| Covenant       | 2,207                | 1 and 1                       | 2 and 2 = 6                  | 1 and 1 = 4                  |
| East. Carolina | 1,449                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| Evangel        | 9,612                | 1 and 1                       | 9 and 9 = 20                 | 4 and 4 = 10                 |
| Grace          | 4,151                | 1 and 1                       | 4 and 4 = 10                 | 2 and 2 = 6                  |
| Gulf Coast     | 2,612                | 1 and 1                       | 2 and 2 = 6                  | 1 and 1 = 4                  |
| Louisiana      | 992                  | 1 and 1                       | 2                            | 2                            |
| Mid-Atlantic   | 4,351                | 1 and 1                       | 4 and 4 = 10                 | 2 and 2 = 6                  |
| Miss. Valley   | 7,552                | 1 and 1                       | 7 and 7 = 16                 | 3 and 3 = 8                  |
| New River      | 897                  | 1 and 1                       | 2                            | 2                            |
| North Georgia  | 2,111                | 1 and 1                       | 2 and 2 = 6                  | 1 and 1 = 4                  |
| Pacific        | 968                  | 1 and 1                       | 2                            | 2                            |
| Philadelphia   | 936                  | 1 and 1                       | 2                            | 2                            |
| South. Florida | 14,258               | 1 and 1                       | 14 and 14 = 30               | 8 and 8 = 18                 |
| Southwest      | 368                  | 1 and 1                       | 2                            | 2                            |
| Tenn. Valley   | 4,102                | 1 and 1                       | 4 and 4 = 10                 | 2 and 2 = 6                  |
| Texas          | 1,602                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| Warrior        | 1,812                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| West. Carolina | 1,335                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| Westminster    | 1,967                | 1 and 1                       | 1 and 1 = 4                  | 2                            |
| Total          | 80,319               | 48                            | 184                          | 110                          |
|                |                      |                               | <u>232</u>                   | <u>158</u>                   |

If the basic allotment were 2 and 2 to each Presbytery with one additional for either 1,000 or 2,000 the Assembly size would be as indicated:

96

280

206

To have perfectly equal representation from each Presbytery, as the Christian Reformed Church does, each Presbytery could be allotted 4 and 4 which would result in an Assembly of 192.

# THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OFFICE OF THE STATED CLERK

February 14, 1981

7401 OLD YORK ROAD, PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19126  
TELEPHONE AREA CODE 215 CAPITAL 4-1883

The Rev. Morton H. Smith, Stated Clerk  
Presbyterian Church in America  
P. O. Box 312  
Brevard, NC 28712

Dear Dr. Smith:

As you may recall from our brief conversation at Atlanta on January 30, I have a very great interest in the movement within the PCA toward what I think your people call a delegated assembly. (We prefer to call it a representative assembly.) We in the OPC went through a similar transition about ten years ago. I suppose I was one of the most conspicuous proponents of that change, and I desire for the PCA (especially if I am to become a part of it) the same blessings that I sought earlier for the OPC. Chief among these for me was and still is the preservation of largely free debate. As I said in Atlanta, I do not think that free debate is really possible in an assembly of 500 or more men, so I was pleased that you were thinking in terms of a smaller number than that.

I hope that you will not think me too presumptuous in presenting for your consideration some of the thinking of our committee that proposed our present representative assembly and our apportionment rules, together with some of my own thoughts and some of the argumentation that was presented in favor of the change in our own church.

It seemed to me at the time, and I am still persuaded, that our state and national legislatures are undoubtedly the most highly developed deliberative bodies in our country today. They meet for many more hours than our general assemblies, and cherish their privileges in debate. I found it highly significant that the U. S. Senate, with 100 members, has much freer debate, and fewer powers granted to its presiding officer, than the House of Representatives, with 435 members. I looked up the sizes of the state legislatures and what I found was very interesting to me.

There are 99 houses in our 50 state legislatures. (Nebraska has a unicameral legislature.) Of those 99 houses, 69, including all of the state senates, have fewer than 100 members. Of the 30 with 100 or more (all lower houses), only 7 have more than 155 members (the OP general assembly is limited to not more than 155 commissioners). Those seven, with their numbers in 1969, were as follows: Connecticut 177, Georgia 195, Illinois 177, Massachusetts 240, Missouri 163, New Hampshire 400, Pennsylvania 203. Five of those seven are original colonies. I suspect, but have not confirmed by research, that those states had representation formulas of one representative for every so many people, and that they grew and grew, as the population grew, until they had to switch over to a system with a fixed number that was apportioned among the political subdivisions on the basis of population. Two of the seven (Ill. &

- 2 -

M. H.) I think have since reduced the sizes of the lower houses of their legislatures.

I would commend for your consideration a plan that does not depend on a formula of one ministerial commissioner per so many ministers on the roll of presbytery, and one elder commissioner per so many churches or so many members. I think it makes more sense to do what the Congress and the state legislatures do, namely, set a maximum that does not change, and then provide for apportioning that number among the presbyteries. That is what we have done in the OPC.

When we were developing what became our apportionment rules for our assembly, I wanted to find out how the House of Representatives is apportioned. What I learned was especially fascinating to me as a mathematical buff of sorts. From the time the size of the House was fixed, up until 1931, the fine points of the apportionment law were governed by what was called the method of "major fractions." After 1931 apportionment was governed by a much more complicated method that in effect creates a slight bias in favor of the smaller states at the expense of the larger states. We decided to use the method of "major fractions" in the OPC. Rather than try to explain it in the abstract, I would like to hypothesize for you an apportionment plan for an augmented PCA and show how it would work using the method of major fractions for the fine details of the apportionment.

#### Major Features of Hypothetical Apportionment Plan

1. General Assembly of 300 commissioners, evenly divided between teaching and ruling elders.
2. Ministers apportioned to the presbyteries in the proportion that the number of ministers on their rolls bears to the total number of ministers in the church.
3. Ruling elder commissioners apportioned to the presbyteries in the proportion that the number of communicant members in the presbytery (exclusive of ministers) bears to the total communicant membership of the church (exclusive of ministers).
4. Fractional remainders awarded to presbyteries in descending order (this is the method of "major fractions").
5. Every presbytery to be represented by at least one minister and one elder.
6. Ties resulting from application of the method of major fractions resolved by awarding not more than three additional teaching and/or ruling elders.

#### An Example

To show how this would work I have taken the latest available figures for the OPC and the RPCES, those for the year ended Dec. 31, 1979. I do not have such figures for the PCA, so I took some that I have, from your 1974 Minutes, and arbitrarily scaled them up to 700 ministers and 80,002 communicant members. I know those numbers are not right, but they don't need to be for this purpose.

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| OPC PRESBYTERIES | Min-<br>isters | Communi-<br>cants | Min.<br>Calc. | Min.<br>Awarded | Elders<br>Calc. | Elders<br>Awarded |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Dakotas          | 25             | 1,039             | 2.733         | 3               | 1.392           | 1                 |
| Mid-Atlantic     | 18             | 821               | 1.968         | 2               | 1.100           | 1                 |
| Midwest          | 25             | 1,715             | 2.733         | 3               | 2.298           | 2                 |
| New Jersey       | 29             | 1,496             | 3.171         | 3               | 2.005           | 2                 |
| NY & New England | 25             | 1,149             | 2.733         | 3               | 1.540           | 1                 |
| Northern Calif.  | 16             | 478               | 1.749         | 2               | 0.641           | 1                 |
| Northwest        | 14             | 450               | 1.531         | 2               | 0.603           | 1                 |
| Ohio             | 14             | 585               | 1.531         | 2               | 0.784           | 1                 |
| Philadelphia     | 45             | 1,589             | 4.920         | 5               | 2.130           | 2                 |
| South            | 16             | 622               | 1.749         | 2               | 0.834           | 1                 |
| Southern Calif.  | 29             | 1,362             | 3.171         | 3               | 1.825           | 2                 |
|                  | <u>256</u>     | <u>11,306</u>     |               | <u>30</u>       |                 | <u>15</u>         |

## PCA PRESBYTERIES

|                   |            |               |        |           |        |            |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|--------|-----------|--------|------------|
| Galvary           | 84         | 11,530        | 9.184  | 9         | 15.453 | 15         |
| Carolina          | 13         | 1,768         | 1.421  | 1         | 2.369  | 2          |
| Central Ga.       | 34         | 3,358         | 3.717  | 4         | 4.500  | 4          |
| Covenant          | 26         | 2,067         | 2.843  | 3         | 2.770  | 3          |
| Evangel           | 61         | 11,716        | 6.669  | 7         | 15.702 | 16         |
| Grace             | 63         | 6,601         | 6.888  | 7         | 8.847  | 9          |
| Gulf Coast        | 24         | 3,346         | 2.624  | 3         | 4.484  | 4          |
| Mid-Atlantic      | 29         | 3,351         | 3.171  | 3         | 4.491  | 4          |
| Mississippi Val.  | 105        | 11,694        | 11.480 | 11        | 15.672 | 16         |
| New River         | 13         | 1,403         | 1.421  | 1         | 1.880  | 2          |
| North Georgia     | 24         | 1,515         | 2.624  | 3         | 2.030  | 2          |
| Pacific           | 55         | 896           | 6.013  | 6         | 1.201  | 1          |
| Southern Florida  | 29         | 8,892         | 3.171  | 3         | 11.917 | 12         |
| Tennessee Val.    | 21         | 4,751         | 2.296  | 2         | 6.367  | 6          |
| Texas             | 21         | 1,554         | 2.843  | 3         | 2.083  | 2          |
| Vanguard          | 16         | 225           | 1.749  | 2         | 0.302  | 1          |
| Warrior           | 29         | 2,680         | 3.171  | 3         | 3.592  | 3          |
| Western Carolinas | 16         | 1,187         | 1.749  | 2         | 1.591  | 1          |
| Westminster       | 32         | 1,468         | 3.499  | 3         | 1.967  | 2          |
|                   | <u>700</u> | <u>80,002</u> |        | <u>76</u> |        | <u>105</u> |

## RPCES PRESBYTERIES

|                |    |       |       |   |       |   |
|----------------|----|-------|-------|---|-------|---|
| California     | 22 | 471   | 2.405 | 2 | 0.631 | 1 |
| Delmarva       | 65 | 5,016 | 7.106 | 7 | 6.722 | 7 |
| Eastern Canada | 6  | 114   | 0.656 | 1 | 0.193 | 1 |
| Florida        | 19 | 1,072 | 2.077 | 2 | 1.437 | 1 |
| Great Lakes    | 12 | 503   | 1.312 | 1 | 0.674 | 1 |
| Great Plains   | 8  | 143   | 0.875 | 1 | 0.192 | 1 |

continued

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| RPCES (cont.)     | Min-<br>isters | Commu-<br>nicants | Min.<br>Calc. | Min.<br>Awarded | Elders<br>Calc. | Elders<br>Awarded |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Illiana           | 18             | 729               | 1.968         | 2               | 0.977           | 1                 |
| Midwestern        | 55             | 1,621             | 6.013         | 6               | 2.172           | 2                 |
| New Jersey        | 16             | 596               | 1.749         | 2               | 0.799           | 1                 |
| New England       | 18             | 417               | 1.968         | 2               | 0.559           | 1                 |
| Pacific Northwest | 23             | 903               | 2.515         | 2               | 1.210           | 1                 |
| Philadelphia      | 40             | 2,314             | 4.373         | 4               | 3.101           | 3                 |
| Pittsburgh        | 24             | 1,473             | 2.624         | 3               | 1.974           | 2                 |
| Rocky Mountain    | 20             | 1,296             | 2.187         | 2               | 1.740           | 2                 |
| Southeast         | 27             | 2,420             | 2.952         | 3               | 3.243           | 3                 |
| Southern          | 27             | 786               | 2.952         | 3               | 1.053           | 1                 |
| Southwest         | 16             | 711               | 1.749         | 2               | 0.953           | 1                 |
|                   | <u>116</u>     | <u>20,615</u>     |               | <u>45</u>       |                 | <u>30</u>         |
| Totals            | 1,372          | 111,923           |               | 151             |                 | 150               |

## Discussion

The "Ministers Calculated" and "Elders Calculated" columns are the pro rata distributions of the 150 ministers and 150 elders among the presbyteries. The "Ministers Awarded" and "Elders Awarded" columns are determined from the "Calculated" columns as follows:

1. Every presbytery is awarded the numbers of minister and elder commissioners represented by the whole number part of its "calculated" column figures. This results in the awarding of 124 ministers and 126 elders.
2. Every presbytery with a zero whole number for either ministers or elders is awarded one minister or elder as the case may be. This results in the award of 2 ministers and 13 elders, leaving 24 ministers and 11 elders to be awarded on the basis of major fractions.
3. The fractional remainders in the "Ministers Calculated" column obtained by dropping the whole numbers are then arranged in descending order. (Fractional remainders are also dropped for the RP Eastern Canada and Great Plains presbyteries, because they have already been awarded a minister each in 2. above.) Then each presbytery, beginning with the one represented by the highest fractional remainder (the "major" fraction), is awarded one additional minister commissioner until the twenty-four to be awarded are used up. However, when we get down to the 24th fraction, there is a tie at .531 between the OP Northwest and Ohio presbyteries, and since they can both be awarded a minister and not exceed the three additional allowed for ties, each is awarded a minister, bringing the total awarded to 151 and the apportionment is complete for ministers.
4. An entirely analogous process awards the 11 elders remaining, beginning with the RP Pittsburgh presbytery at .974, and ending at the PCA Mississippi Valley Presbytery at .672.

The Rev. Morton H. Smith

February 14, 1981

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There are a number of other points concerning this method that could be pointed out, but I have already burdened you sufficiently. If the method commends itself to you, you know that I would be happy to address those other points. If the method does not commend itself, this far, additional points will not help resuscitate it.

I am also enclosing copies of those parts of our Form of Government and Standing Rules of the General Assembly containing the provisions under which we operate. The portion from the standing rules appears formidable, but the actual calculations are not.

Thank you for bearing with me in this matter that I think is of great importance for the character of future PCA assemblies.

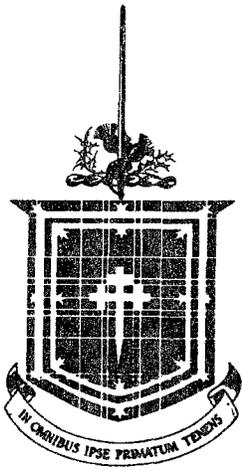
Yours in Christ's service,

*Dick Barker*

Richard A. Barker, Stated Clerk

639 Shadowlawn Drive  
Westfield, NJ 07090

| General<br>Assembly | Possible<br>Churches | Churches<br>Representated | % of<br>Churches<br>Present | Ruling<br>Elders | % of<br>Total<br>Enroll. | Teaching<br>Elders | Total<br>Enrollment |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| First               | 260                  | 215                       | 82                          | 179              | 46                       | 208                | 387                 |
| Second              | 300(est)             | 255                       | 85                          | 219              | 47                       | 246                | 465                 |
| Third               | 346                  | 294                       | 85                          | 259              | 48                       | 284                | 543                 |
| Fourth              | 393                  | 305                       | 78                          | 265              | 45                       | 325                | 590                 |
| Fifth               | 405                  | 319                       | 79                          | 247              | 40                       | 367                | 614                 |
| Sixth               | 428                  | 295                       | 69                          | 216              | 38                       | 353                | 569                 |
| Seventh             | 440                  | 350                       | 80                          | 260              | 38                       | 421                | 681                 |
| Eighth              | 474                  | 367                       | 77                          | 247              | 37                       | 413                | 660                 |
| Ninth               | 501                  | 353                       | 70                          | 243              | 36                       | 430                | 673                 |
| Tenth               | 733                  | 539                       | 76                          | 359              | 35                       | 674                | 1,033               |



## COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

12330 CONWAY ROAD  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63141  
Telephone: (314) 434-4044

August 5, 1982

Messrs. Gilchrist, Joseph, Smith, and Williamson  
Study Committee on a Delegated Assembly

Dear Brothers:

The Committee on Administration at its July 30, 1982, meeting appointed us as a Study Committee on a Delegated Assembly. The purpose of this letter is to arrange for our first meeting, to delineate the question and suggest assignments.

I would suggest that we meet after the special meeting of the C.O.E. on August 27, if it is held, to conserve time and travel funds. I will inform you as soon as possible concerning this. Tentatively plan for this, unless this is unsatisfactory, and if so, please inform me as soon as possible.

As you know, the Assembly has done two things in connection with our question. It has voted to continue an undelegated assembly and it has voted to continue study on a delegated assembly. This might suggest that the church is not quite ready but knows that a delegated assembly probably must come and wants to have a strong rationale, a plan that preserves the best of both approaches, and a transition that can be likened to "weaning." Our study could take the above approach or it could line up the pros and cons for undelegated and delegated assemblies and let the Assembly decide, or of course it could combine the two. In any event, the effectiveness of governing or doing the Assembly's business must be the first consideration, coupled with a concern for "grass-roots" and wide involvement, but also the economic consideration for the two types of assemblies from the point of view of the Standing Committees and the Church-at-large. We will need to remind ourselves that our church government is in principle representative and thus we have assemblies, not conventions or town meetings, and that the ruling elders have never known an undelegated assembly or even presbytery, only the teaching elders. If we propose a delegated assembly plan, we might assure fairness for minorities in the presbyteries by proposing that delegates (commissioners) be selected by some combination of seniority and election. These are only seed thoughts from the new man on board and may only repeat what you, Bill Joseph, and your previous committees have already said.

May I suggest the following assignments to prepare us for the August 27 meeting so that we may come to that meeting either with a rough draft in hand or to draft one there. May I suggest that the materials be distributed

Study Committee on a Delegated Assembly  
Page 2  
August 5, 1982

among the members as soon as possible. I would suggest that Morton Smith, our Stated Clerk, provide each member before August 27 with copies of all reports, even ones failing to be adopted, and actions on the G.A. level plus any overtures relating to this matter. I would suggest that Bill Joseph provide us before our August 27 meeting with any background from the previous committee(s). I would suggest that Paul Gilchrist provide us before August 27 with copies of the RPC,ES plan for delegated assembly with any explanation that might be helpful. I will provide the OPC plan. I would respectfully ask that you, Jack Williamson, as one of the founding fathers, former moderator, continuing parliamentarian, and lawyer, serve the committee and the church that you know so well, by providing the committee on August 27 with a draft proposal. I would trust that other members of the committee will get their materials to you forthwith so that you can use them in drafting a proposal. May I mention to you, Jack, and the rest of the committee that the RPC,ES plan has already been acceptable and used by a considerable percentage of the enlarged church and Assembly. We could revise it by setting a goal of "x" number of commissioners as an appropriate size assembly and work towards reduction, the "weaning" process, on a percentage reduction each year (10% or 20%?) until the goal is reached from our present undelegated assembly. For example, the first year the plan went into effect, each presbytery could send 90% (or 80%) of its potential teaching and ruling elders. The year following that 80% (or 60%) and so on until the size agreed upon is reached and is maintained.

I hope these assignments are agreeable and will serve to accomplish our task. If not, please let me know. My apologies for the shortness of time, but I didn't want to call an expensive separate meeting and the next C.O.E. is not until December 10 and 11, and I think we shouldn't wait that long to get under way.

Cordially yours, in Christ,



George W. Knight, III, Chairman  
Study Committee on a Delegated Assembly

GWK:bjp

P.S. A portion of Chapter XV of the Form of Government of the OPC is enclosed with section 2 stating their plan. I will attempt to get from their Stated Clerk any further particulars. This plan may be too small for the PCA.

Presbyterian  
Church  
in  
America

PROOF

OFFICE OF THE MODERATOR

To: All Members of the Presbyterian  
Church in America

Subject: Call to celebration

Many of our churches in the Presbyterian Church in America have scheduled their quarterly observance of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday in October. Others, especially some from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, plan their monthly observance of the sacrament on the first Sunday of the month.

Now that we have all joined together in the enlarged PCA it seems most proper to praise God for the enlargement of our fellowship by a special celebration communion on the first Sunday in October. The Grand Rapids General Assembly suggested that all the congregations across the denomination join in common recognition of our enlarged fellowship.

We believe it will be pleasing to the Lord, an encouragement to fellow Christians, and a testimony to the world if we would thus set aside October 3 as a day of thanksgiving to God for the consummation of our joining together in this augmented ministry. We urge our pastors to give further information to our people about the whole denomination and to challenge our people to rise to meet the growing opportunities at home and abroad.

May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and King of the Church, bless our new communion together in His name.

Yours in Christ,

*R. Laird Harris*

R. Laird Harris  
Moderator, 1982 Assembly

*O delete*

Chapter IV

THE SYNOD

1. a. *Members.* All ministers and elders in this denomination shall be eligible for appointment to membership in the synod.

b. Until such time as there are three hundred ministers in this denomination, all ministers able to attend a meeting of the synod shall be enrolled as members thereof, their names being certified by the clerks of their respective presbyteries to the stated clerk of synod.

c. Until such time as the number of ministers in this denomination equals three hundred, the elders who are entitled to represent their presbyteries and their churches as members of a meeting of the synod, with their alternates, if any, shall be selected by the sessions of the churches in the same number and in the same manner in which elder members of presbyteries are selected. It is desirable, but not mandatory, that the elders who are members of presbyteries shall be members of the synod. The clerks of sessions shall certify the names of their delegates, and alternates, if any, to the clerks of their respective presbyteries. The clerks of presbyteries shall certify to the clerk of the synod the names of elders and alternates appointed by the sessions of the particular churches and shall state accurately the number of elders which may be members of their respective presbyteries, which is the same as the number of elders from each presbytery eligible for membership in the synod.

d. It is imperative that the synod shall always be a genuinely deliberative body, which would be impossible if it were so large as to be cumbersome. If the number of possible commissioners is kept below six hundred, the actual attendance at any one meeting is expected to be of reasonably working size.

e. When there are as many as three hundred ministers in the denomination the stated clerk of the synod shall make announcement of this fact at the next stated meeting of the synod, and shall so inform the stated clerks of all presbyteries in writing. Such announcement shall be mandatory and not discretionary, and, if true, shall be equally valid,

whether made by the stated clerk, or any other member of the synod.

f. At the next stated meeting of the synod following such announcement, and thereafter, the commissioners to the synod be only ninety percent of the ministers of the several presbyteries or the next whole number below ninety percent, with an equal number of elders from each presbytery, such ministers and elders being elected as commissioners to the synod by their several presbyteries. The presbyteries shall be free to select their ministerial delegates and their ruling elder delegates on such principles as shall seem suitable to the presbyteries, but care should be exercised to give the particular churches as fair representation as is practicable.

g. When the number of ministers who may be commissioners to a meeting of synod shall again reach the number of three hundred, notice shall again be given as provided above, and the number of minister and elder commissioners shall be further reduced by ten percent to the nearest whole number below ninety percent of the previous number.

h. The process of ten percent reductions herein provided for shall be continued so that the total number of ministers to be commissioners shall be kept below three hundred, with a corresponding number of elders, provided that every presbytery shall always be entitled to elect at least one minister and one elder as commissioners.

i. If after the announcement and action contemplated in e and f above, through adverse circumstances, the number of ministers in the denomination should be reduced, the process of ten percent reductions shall be reversed, provided that the total number of ministers and elders to be elected as commissioners to a meeting of a synod shall not be greater than six hundred.

j. Subsequent to such announcement and action as contemplated in e and f above, the presbyteries shall elect commissioners for each stated and *pro re nata* meeting of the synod. All ministers in the presbytery and all elders in any of the congregations are eligible for election as commissioners to synod. Yet it is desirable, but not mandatory, that the presbyteries shall fill their quotas of elder commissioners with elders designated by the sessions to represent their congregations in their presbyteries insofar as possible. If a presbytery fails to meet to elect commissioners to a *pro re nata* meeting of synod, those commissioners elected for the previous stated meeting shall serve for the *pro re nata* meeting.

2. *Quorum.* Any thirty commissioners, at least one half, but not all