

MINUTES

EIGHTEENTH STATED MEETING  
NEW RIVER PRESBYTERY  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
March 14-15, 1980

Kanawha Salines Presbyterian Church, Charleston, WV

Opening Worship: Moderator Michael Bolus presided as the worship service began at 7:30 p.m., March 14. Following the opening prayer, the singing of a hymn, an offering for Presbytery, and a song by the host church choir, The moderator spoke, his subject being "America, a Nation in Peril." The second coming of Christ was cited as our great hope and inspiration.

The service was concluded with the observance of the Lord's Supper with the moderator and host pastor presiding and the session of the host church serving.

Call to order: Presbytery was called to order. Teaching elders present were George B. Alder II, Michael Bolus, John Dodd, Norman Evans, William Hill, Jr., Rod Mays, and Linwood Wilkes.

Ruling elders present were Thomas Minter (Lebanon), Charles Kennedy (Little River), Jerry Martin (Faith), John Jenkins (Rebecca Littlepage), D. H. Dority and F. S. Shockley (Westminster), William Pascavis (Kanawha Salines), Paige Melton Friday night - Jim Eades Saturday (Covenant).

A quorum was declared present by the clerk.

Election of Moderator: Nominations for moderator were called for. Michael Bolus was nominated to serve as moderator for a second term. Motion seconded. There were no further nominations and Rev. Bolus was elected unanimously.

Rev. Dodd gave the welcome for the host church. F. S. Shockley of Westminster was attending his first meeting of Presbytery. George Alder introduced two visitors from Presbytery's newest church, Friendship, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Brooks, Jr. There were also two visitors from Martinsville, Va., Larry Burgin and Jim Robertson.

Minutes: Upon requests for a number of corrections, the moderator suggested that Norman Evans and Linwood Wilkes meet with the clerk before adjournment to agree on the changes needed, following which the minutes could be approved. With this understanding, the approval of the minutes was postponed.

Docket: The clerk noted that the examination of sessional records had not been docketed. This was added to the docket and scheduled for the morning break time. The corrected docket was adopted.

Committee on Thanks: George Alder II and Pat Jenkins were named to the Committee on Thanks.

With several overtures to be acted upon on Saturday morning, members of Presbytery requested that they be read before the evening recess. The moderator read one which he was presenting and the clerk read one from Covenant.

The evening's program concluded with testimonies from each church. Following the announcement of committee meetings, and prayer, Presbytery recessed on Saturday morning.

Presbytery reconvened at 8:30 a.m., March 15.

The moderator led in a season of prayer.

Clerk's report: The Friday night offering amounted to \$89.50, giving a cash balance of \$352.48 with debts of about \$20.00.

There were no requests for absence although two teaching elders (Williams and Fishel) were absent.

The clerk had a letter from Rev. William Fitzhenry requesting his dismissal to Pittsburgh Presbytery R.P.C.E.S. A letter from that Presbytery had been received requesting his transfer letter. It was moved that Rev. Fitzhenry be dismissed to Pittsburgh Presbytery and that the clerk send a letter in good standing to that Presbytery. Seconded and carried.

The clerk read this letter from Coy Hughes, South Ruffner Church clerk of session: "To: Clerk of New River Presbytery - This letter is written to inform the New River Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church in America that as of March 9, 1980 the congregation of South Ruffner Presbyterian Church has voted to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in America. Enclosed please find a copy of the minutes of our meeting held Sunday, March 9, 1980." Signed by Coy Hughes. The enclosed minutes showed a vote of 23 for withdrawal and one against.

Motion was made and seconded to accept the action of South Ruffner Church on having withdrawn from New River Presbytery and the P.C.A.; and to have the clerk acknowledge this to the session of the South Ruffner Church, expressing the regret of the Presbytery; and pray the people will continue to study the Westminster Confession of Faith to see its conformity to the Word of God; and pray their return to the P.C.A. in the future. Motion carried. That concluded the clerk's report.

The moderator assigned the duty of examining the sessional records to the MUS Committee at 10:15, recess time.

The moderator reported that a delegation from the Jersey Presbyterian Church, Jersey, Ohio was coming and that that church would possibly petition New River Presbytery. He requested that they be given the privilege of the floor. Granted.

Committee Reports: Ministers and Candidates - The moderator turned the chair over to F. S. Shockley while he took the floor to read the report of the Commission to Work with South Ruffner Church and Rev. William Fitzhenry. It was moved that the report be made a part of the minutes. Motion carried. (Exhibit A)

A call to George Alder II from Friendship Church was read. That call, with the information that Rev. Alder is self-employed, is attached to these minutes. (Exhibit B). His installation will take place in a called meeting of Presbytery on April 12 at 1:00 p.m. Norman Evans will preach, Doug Dority will preside, Bob Kresge will charge the congregation and pastor, Rod Mays will give the benediction.

A called meeting of Presbytery will be held at Friendship Church on April 12 for the purpose of examining Rev. Ron Parrish prior to his becoming the organizing pastor of the Martinsville Mission.

It was moved and seconded to ask the Moderator to write Rev. David Williams to see if he is involved in organizing a church in North Georgia Presbytery (P.C.A.). Motion carried.

Rev. Bolus moved the report as a whole be received. Motion carried.

The delegation from the Jersey Church arrived and were invited to the platform. Rev. Stephen Mesarch stated the church's desire to be affiliated with the PCA and their being directed to the New River Presbytery by some other ministers in the P.C.A. His remarks were followed by those Vernon Smith and Bob Shaffer, teaching elders.

Mission to the United States - given by chairman Dodd. He moved that the MUS Conference be postponed. Seconded and carried.

The report of the organization meeting of Friendship Church was presented and received as information. It was moved that Presbytery's financial support of George Alder be discontinued as of April 1 and that he periodically report on his church's financial status. Motion carried.

It was moved that the Martinsville Mission be received under the supervision of the Westminster session. Motion carried. Two men present were introduced and spoke briefly. They were Jim Robertson and Larry Burgin.

The call of the Martinsville Mission to Rev. Ron Parrish was approved. (Exhibit C)

Norman Evans moved that since the support of the Princeton Church will cease as of April 1, thereby freeing Presbytery's budget for the remainder of 1980, and since there are several areas of West Virginia without a PCA witness and possibly with little or no Reformed and Presbyterian witness (as Clarksburg, Parkersburg, Morgantown, etc.), therefore we instruct the MUS Committee to act quickly to seek potential mission works in these or other areas through advertising. Motion approved.

Norman Evans made the following motion concerning the Pliny Church - since there are presently no active elders living in the area of the church now, and since there are only two or three ladies attending the church, the MUS Committee is instructed to contact them about changing to a mission status under Presbytery's MUS Committee guidance. Motion approved.

Rev. Dodd moved the report be received as a whole. Motion carried.

Mission to the World - made by chairman Harry Musser, Jr. He reported on his attendance at a seminar on foreign missions at which the entire staff of MTW was present. Work with the refugees in southeast Asia was one of the seminar subjects. Presbytery was reminded of the importance of Missions Conferences. Report received as information.

Christian Education - made by George Alder, chairman. Believing that the campus ministry at the University of Charleston will continue to be led by Rev. Fitzhenry, Pat Jenkins, committee member will keep in touch with him in case Presbytery could be of assistance.

Following considerable discussion, it was moved by the chairman that Presbytery camp be held at the Bluefield Salvation Army Camp in the month of August looking to Presbytery for help in supplying counselors and a minimum of 50 children. Motion carried.

The report was received as a whole.

Examination of Minutes: During a recess sessional minutes were examined with the following notations:

- Westminster - no exceptions or notations
- Faith - no exceptions or notations
- Kanawha Salines - no exceptions, several notations
- Lebanon - two exceptions concerning each set of minutes; who opened meetings with prayer and who closed them with prayer? also who makes motions?
- Little River - two notations, the first similar to the first exception above, the second asking if the meetings are called or stated.
- Littlepage - no exceptions, one notation concerning closing prayer for September 24 meeting.
- Friendship - no exceptions or notations
- Covenant - to be examined at called meeting on April 12.

Committee reports continued following recess: Nominating Committee - no report.

GA Nominating Committee - Norman Evans, Presbytery representative, attended the meeting in Atlanta, having previously supplied names for all GA committees. He was chosen committee secretary. Harry Musser, Jr. is the committee's choice for MTTW. Rev. Evans was nominated for the Assembly Theological Examining Committee. Report received as information.

Stewardship Committee - no report

New Business: An overture (exhibit D) from Covenant was distributed and considered. Jim Eades moved its approval. Motion seconded. It failed to carry by a vote of 12 against and two for. Rev. Mays notified Presbytery that a complaint would be filed with the GA. Rev. Alder moved that the moderator represent Presbytery at GA in regards to the complaint.

The moderator was also designated to represent Presbytery in response to complaint filed concerning Presbytery's handling of matters with Rev. Linwood Wilkes.

The moderator presented a personal overture. Since there were no copies and because of the difficulty of voting on the overture without reading it, it was moved that copies be mailed to Presbytery and that it be considered at the July meeting. Carried.

Thomas Minter moved that all overtures be in the hands of the clerk thirty days prior to Presbytery and that copies be mailed to Presbytery before the meeting. Motion carried.

Presbytery recessed for dinner at 1:00. At the dinner George Alder read the report of the Committee on Thanks.

Presbytery reconvened at 2:30. The minutes of the 17th Stated Meeting were corrected as follows:

To be added to the Mission to the United States report: "It was moved and seconded that a congregation from Indian Valley, Virginia, be accepted as a mission under the Westminster session. Motion carried."

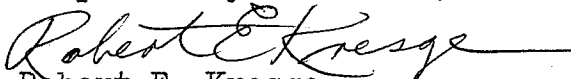
Third paragraph from bottom of page 2: change to "John Dodd moved that a Presbytery MUS Conference be held April 19, 1980, with details to be worked out by the MUS Committee by the March meeting and with all churches to be encouraged to guard the date and participate in the Conference. Motion seconded and carried."

Installation of WIC officers on page 4 - change to read "George Alder installed Mrs. Jeanne Martin as president and Mrs. Dama Lynn as treasurer. The other new officers, Mrs. Elizabeth Dunbar (chairwoman of the Christian Growth Committee) and Mrs. Willadean Plantz (chairwoman of the MUS Committee) were absent."

Third paragraph from close of minutes on page 4: change to "Rev. Evans, who had voted with the majority in the executive session, requested a reconsideration of that decision and then moved that Rev. Wilkes be instructed to write to each person he previously wrote to regarding Rev. Fitzhenry, expressing his wrong and repentance for his remarks made against the character of Rev. Fitzhenry." "Seconded and carried."

Presbytery adjourned with prayer at 2:40.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Robert E. Kresge  
Stated Clerk

(July meeting - July 11 and 12 at Rebecca Littlepage)

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF NEW RIVER PRESBYTERY TO WORK WITH SOUTH RUFFNER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND REV. WILLIAM FITZHENRY OF CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA.

1. November 9-10, 1979: Presbytery meeting at Lebanon Church, Craigsville, Va.

A communication was received from the South Ruffner Presbyterian Church, termed an "appeal" by them, but received later as a "memorial" by the commission of presbytery. This memorial concerned a request for action on a previous call by members of the congregation to the Session of the church to hear a call to ask presbytery to terminate the pastoral relationship of William Fitzhenry with the church. The meeting was not called by Session; rather, it was seen as out of order, disturbing to the peace and unity of the church, and the members signing the petition and two elders (Bob Gallagher and Coy Hughes) were dismissed by Session as elders of the South Ruffner Church. Also, in the back ground of matters was a previous congregational meeting in which there was a vote (27-23) of the congregation to leave the P.C.A. That meeting was ruled by the Moderator as having failed; and the call for a congregational meeting to terminate the pastoral relationship followed. It should be noted that the memorial to presbytery did not contest Mr. Fitzhenry's ruling that a simple majority did not carry the motion. (See Memorial #1, below).

It was the pleasure of presbytery to appoint a commission to seek to handle the situation at the church. The commission was termed an Administrative Commission, and made up of the present Committee on Candidates and Ministers, with the addition of Pastor James Fishel and Ruling elder Pat Jenkins.

With the men just mentioned, the Commission was comprised of Teaching Elders, Michael Bolus, George Alder, and John Dodd; and, Ruling Elders, Curtis Carroll, Jerry Martin, and Charles Kennedy.

The presbytery gave commission authority to meet with the congregation, the pastor, and the session, and seek to make binding decisions by December 31, 1979.

2. December 1, 1979: Commission met at Princeton PCA Mission, Princeton, W. Va.

Present: Michael Bolus, George Alder, James Fishel, Pat Jenkins, Jerry Martin, Curtis Carroll (John Dodd and Charles Kennedy, absent).

The Commission had present as an invited guest, Dr. Morton Smith, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. Dr. Smith was consulted on proper procedures.

As Commission was called to order in prayer by the chairman of Candidates and Ministers Committee, Mr. Bolus, two procedural matters were then handled. Mr. Bolus was elected as chairman and Mr. Martin as secretary of the Commission.

The commission proceeded to ask Dr. Smith to sit with them, and moved to form themselves as an administrative commission, no judicial case being before the commission. (Book of Church Order, chapter 41).

The communication, referred by presbytery, was received as an ~~appeal~~ <sup>Memorial</sup>, in accordance with B.C.O. 41-5. Parties from the congregation submitting the "Memorial" (which they had improperly labeled as an "Appeal") were heard; then, Pastor, and parties representing Session were heard by the Commission. Action of Commission was:

- (1) In Regard to Memorial #1...The General Assembly's Judicial Business Committee was to contacted for an opinion. The Memorial reads as follows:

"Without substantiation or reference to uphold his decision, the Moderator, William A. Fitzhenry, ruled from the chair that a majority, or 51% of the members on the church roll as of October 21, 1979 would be required for the motion to pass. An appeal of the decision (ruling) of the chair was properly made and seconded. The moderator, William A. Fitzhenry, refused to place the appeal of the decision of the chair to a vote by the congregation, as required by standard meeting practices. The moderator, Mr. Fitzhenry, stated erroneously that his ruling was not debatable."

- (2) In regard to Memorial #2...The Commission voted to instruct the Session of South Ruffner Church to call a congregational meeting no later than Dec. 31, 1979 for the purpose of petitioning New River Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship between Rev. William A. Fitzhenry and the South Ruffner Presbyterian Church.

Further, on the basis of B.C.O. 41:2,3, the Commission questioned whether the Session acted in wisdom and equity and in a suited manner to the welfare of the church in suspending these members from the sealing ordinances of the church, and required the South Ruffner Session to review its action and to correct it by rescinding its previous action, thus allowing the congregational meeting to proceed with those people legally allowed to vote in the meeting. Should the vote to sever the pastoral relationship carry, the Commission recommends the church continue Mr. Fitzhenry's financial support until presbytery dissolves the relationship.

Memorial #2: "At a legally called session meeting on October 27, 1979, the clerk of session, Coy Hughes, presented a petition signed by 38 members requesting a congregational meeting to dissolve our pastoral relation with William A. Fitzhenry. Mr. Fitzhenry charged elders Gallagher and Hughes with conduct which is against the peace, unity and purity of the church. Mr. Fitzhenry then ordered them out of the meeting and proceeded to suspend them, and using the petition, to suspend members recorded thereon from the sealing ordinances and from all offices of the church. As of this writing, the petition to call a congregational meeting that was properly presented at the October 27, 1979 session meeting has been ignored in violation of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 26-2."

(Note)...It should be noticed that there was a sense of uneasiness concerning the denial of Bob Gallagher about certain chapters in the Confession of Faith, which came to the surface more in later talks among the Commission. This resulted, as later Minutes show, in the call of the resignation of the Session at South Ruffner church and the election of a new Session, examined by the presbytery's Commission).

3. December 5, 1979: On Tuesday, December 4, 1979, Mr. Fitzhenry contacted Mr. Bolus, chairman of the Commission, and asked the following:

- 1--That commission act to receive his resignation, either by Dec. 16, or Dec. 31.
- 2--That he receive salary through December, 1979, and be allowed to live in the Manse (If Needed) until June 1, 1980.
- 3--That it would be his intention to seek ministry in the RPCES.
- 4--That he understood this to rescind his complaint to the General Assembly about the action of Presbytery in establishing the Administrative Commission.

The chairman, Mr. Bolus, polled the members of the Commission, and the results were:

- 1--Instruct the Session of South Ruffner to call a congregational meeting on December 16, 1979 for the purpose of presenting the resignation of Pastor Fitzhenry.
- 2--That the resignation be effective December 16, 1979, as soon as voted on and approved by the congregation.
- 3--That the church be asked to continue salary for Pastor Fitzhenry, if needed, for as much as 90 days from December 16, 1979; and to allow him the use of the Manse until June 1, 1980, if needed.
- 4--That the Commission, under provisions of BCO, chapter 41, remind the Session to proceed immediately to review and correct previous action in suspending the 38 members of the church, as having been found out of accord with our Constitution.
- 5--That the present Session of South Ruffner resign and call a congregational meeting for January 27, 1980 for the purpose of electing a new Session. All 5 present members would be eligible for renomination, along with other men biblically qualified (BCO, chp. 25). With the resignation of the Session it would be the responsibility of the Commission to meet with, interview, and determine all men eligible for having names of ballot.

The congregation was informed of these actions and given a month from December 9, 1979 to January 6, 1980 to submit names to the Commission through a Nominations Box in the vestibule of the church.

It was determined, in order to help the church proceed as smoothly as possible, that the Session would resign on the day of the election and then the congregation would immediately proceed to re-elect a Session from the names approved by the Commission of Presbytery.

4. December 16, 1979: A congregational meeting was held at the South Ruffner Church, the congregation voting to accept Rev. Fitzhenry's resignation and continue salary until January 31, 1980, with use of Manse until June 30, 1980, if needed. It should be noted that the 90 day salary recommendation by the Commission was rejected.

5. January 6, 1980: A congregational meeting was held at the South Ruffner Church, at which the action of the congregation on December 16, 1979 was reconsidered. The resulting new action was to stop salary on December 31, 1979, and ask Mr. Fitzhenry to vacate the manse in 30 days.

Note: By this time information had come that Mr. Fitzhenry was meeting with a group, which later has become a mission church of the RPCES. This was a factor in the January 6, 1980 meeting.





The Friendship Presbyterian Church in America, Princeton, West Virginia, being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, George Bayne Alder, II, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation, promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay your phone bill each month and to provide \$50 (fifty dollars) toward your automobile expenses each month along with another benefit, a month's vacation each year, during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church.

In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this 9th day of March, A.D. 1980.

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Attest: I, having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to George Bayne Alder, II for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the Book of Church Order, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

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Moderator of the Meeting

A Petition to the Presbytery of New River  
of the Presbyterian Church in America  
concerning the Organization of a Martinsville Mission Church

March 14, 1980  
Martinsville, Virginia

In gratitude to our sovereign God for bringing us together as a group of believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Martinsville, Henry County area; and

In appreciation for the wise counsel and ready assistance provided by various members, ministers, committees and courts of the Presbyterian Church in America over the past year;

We the undersigned, as indicated below, petition the Presbytery of New River to organize us into a particular mission church in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America.

In making this request, relying on God for strength, we solemnly promise and covenant to walk together as an organized mission church, on the principles of the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in America, being zealous and faithful in maintaining the peace and purity of the whole body.

Adopted \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURES

James A. Robertson  
Kathryn Buggin  
Larry B. Buggin  
Thomas J. Vidmar  
Carol B. Richards  
Carolyn S. Robertson  
Tracy Robertson 10

Craig Robertson 14  
Robert E. Epps 5  
Kathy Engels  
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TO THE NEW RIVER PRESBYTERY

WHEREAS, the boundaries of the New River Presbytery are very broad and the nine churches distantly scattered; thereby, making fellowship and cooperation difficult, and

WHEREAS, the 1978 yearbook of the Presbyterian Church in America records a very poor financial report of total contributions to the Presbytery by its churches of \$6,164 of which approximately 80% of that amount goes to one mission work in Princeton; thereby, making it financially impossible to begin other new works or support other causes, and

WHEREAS, two of the nine churches have only reported 17 and 34 members respectively and have not had any reported additions in 1978. One has not had a pastor in several years and the other is in a two field situation, and

WHEREAS, three of the churches (Lebanon, Little River, and Westminster) and the mission, (Princeton) are closer to the bounds of other Presbyterys, and

WHEREAS, several Presbytery meetings in the past have shown very serious divisions, doctrinal disagreement, and a disregard for the Book of Church Order and the Westminster Confession of Faith, and

WHEREAS, it is apparent to this session that the New River Presbytery does nothing but meet four times a year, supports a struggling mission work with most of its money, and shows no viability or effectiveness in starting new churches, nor is financially able to start any churches, and

WHEREAS, the New River Presbytery has been cited by the General Assembly for improper action, and

WHEREAS, a commission appointed by Presbytery failed to carry out and enforce its decisions as well as taking improper action, and

WHEREAS, this same commission obviously, took sides with a dissident and non-confessional group, and

WHEREAS, the New River Presbytery has shown its inability to deal with one of its churches and has seen a division take place, which has possibly reduced the number of churches in the Presbytery and has definitely affected the financial base of the Presbytery, and,

WHEREAS, the Presbytery failed to deal with one of its ministers who had written slanderous remarks about another minister in the New River Presbytery;

THEREFORE, because the New River Presbytery has proven itself not to be viable and effective, due to financial weaknesses, the number of churches, geographical locations, serious divisions

and doctrinal differences, the session of the Covenant Presbyterian Church, believing that the New River Presbytery is not viable as a Reformed Presbyterian witness in the Presbyterian Church in America hereby overtures the New River Presbytery to overture the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to dissolve the New River Presbytery and approve the following plan:

1. That the following ministers and, or their churches due to their geographical locations, seek to labor in the bounds of the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery:

Rev. Wayne Good

Rev. William Hill

Rev. Lee Trinkle

Rev. Linwood Wilkes

2. That the Rev. David Williams, due to his geographical location, seek to labor in the bounds of the North Georgia Presbytery.

3. That the following ministers and, or their churches due to their geographical locations, seek to labor in the Westminster Presbytery:

Rev. George Alder

Rev. Mickey Bolus

Rev. John Dodd

South Ruffner Presbyterian Church

Rev. Norman Evans

Rev. Jim Fishel

Rev. Rod Mays

Pliny Presbyterian Church

Approved unanimously by the Session of the Covenant Presbyterian Church 2/18/80.

Dr. Rod S. Mays, Moderator  
Mr. L. Paige Melton, Clerk  
Mr. Ralph Martin  
Mr. John Handley

Mr. Mark George  
Mr. Jim Eades  
Mr. Jim Jarvis  
Mr. Jack Simpson