

WHAT SHOULD A MINISTER DO?

When a minister's congregation separates from the denomination, what should he do? What steps can he take toward personal separation from his presbytery?

Of course, the minister is always in danger of being divested of office, with or without censure. No matter which of the various routes toward separation he may take, his presbytery may consider his actions to be schismatic and may therefore "defrock" him. Though this almost certainly would not deprive him of his ministerial office in the continuing Church it is, nevertheless, a serious matter and one that no minister treats lightly.

But, back to the immediate subject: what should the minister do when he wishes to separate from the denomination?

He may write into the congregation's Resolution of Separation a statement of his desire to have his name erased from the roll of presbytery and declare that the congregation's adoption of the resolution also separates him.

He may simply report to the presbytery that he renounces the jurisdiction of the presbytery, leaving the disposition of the matter to the court. The court may divest him of his office with or without censure, or may simply erase his name from the roll.

He may report to the presbytery that he renounces the jurisdiction of the court, and request that his name be erased from the roll. The presbytery may or may not grant the request and may send a Commission to counsel with him.

The minister may report that he is renouncing the jurisdiction of the presbytery and request that he be dismissed to the temporary care of his Session. Though the Session is not an ordaining body with jurisdiction over ministers, a number of the brethren have selected this particular procedure in recent weeks.

The minister may also request presbytery to dismiss him to a presbytery soon-to-be-formed, or to a presbytery of another, already established denomination. Both of these routes have proven successful.

Another alternative is to request dismissal to an already established provisional presbytery in the continuing Church movement. The problem with this is that few PCUS presbyteries will recognize any of the provisional bodies. Some PCUS courts have already stated that they would rather dismiss

a church to independency than to a continuing Church presbytery!

It may be that a combination of some of these alternatives is best. For instance, a minister might renounce the jurisdiction of the presbytery and request that he be dismissed to the temporary care of his Session with the view that he will as soon as possible join another presbytery.

At any rate, the minister's action ordinarily should coincide with the congregation's action. If he should be divested or dismissed before the congregation separates, the presbytery could declare his pulpit vacant and send a man of their appointment to Moderate the Session and fill the pulpit. If he waits until after the congregation votes to withdraw, the presbytery may force him from the pulpit by refusing to give him permission to labor "outside its bounds."

So we're back to the original question: What should a minister do? All of the options listed above have been successfully tried in various situations. The answer rests upon the dictates of the minister's own conscience and his local and immediate circumstances. Perhaps the better procedure is that of requesting presbytery to dismiss the minister to a presbytery soon-to-be-formed. This makes it possible for the PCUS presbytery to dismiss the man to something, and encourages the separating minister to seek another presbytery connection as soon as possible.

THE PRESBYTERY AND YOUR SESSION

A number of presbyteries have recently taken action designed to delay and discourage proposed withdrawal procedures on the part of local congregations and Sessions.

In these instances, the courts have appointed an Administrative Commission for the purpose of investigating situations where it is alleged that separation is contemplated, and have "instructed" local Sessions that they may not call congregational meetings until they have given 90 days' notice to presbytery.

Our question is, does a presbytery have the right to forbid a Session to call a congregational meeting?

In the *Book of Church Order*, 16-7(2), it seems to be plain that a presbytery can assume original

(Continued on page 3)



THE ADVISORY CONVENTION

August 7, 8, 9, 1973

Asheville, N. C.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND AS A VOTING REPRESENTATIVE?

1. Any regularly ordained Minister who signs the Reaffirmations of 1973.
2. Any Session who has adopted the Reaffirmations of 1973 may elect representatives to the Advisory Convention on the same basis that they send representatives to presbytery.
3. Any Congregation which has adopted the Reaffirmations of 1973 may elect representatives on the same basis that they send representatives to presbytery.

HOW MUST WE REGISTER?

1. Sign (as Minister, Session, or Congregation) the Reaffirmations of 1973.
2. Elect official representatives from the Session or Congregation, on the same basis which you elect representatives to presbytery.
3. Return to us your **signed tear slip** from the Reaffirmations.
4. Return the enclosed card with the proper information filled in on **both sides** of the card.

MUST A MINISTER OR CHURCH ALREADY HAVE SEPARATED FROM THE PCUS TO ATTEND THE ADVISORY CONVENTION?

No, but they must have signed or adopted the Reaffirmations of 1973 as an indication of their desire to be a part of The Continuing Presbyterian Church. (Representation at the first General Assembly will be possible only for those who have separated by that date.)

WHERE WILL THE ADVISORY CONVENTION BE HELD?

The Advisory Convention will be held at The Grove Park Inn, Asheville, N. C., August 7, 8, 9, 1973, Convening August 7th at 7:00 P.M. until Thursday, August 9th at 12 o'clock noon.

WHAT ABOUT OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS?

You must make your own arrangements for motel and transportation. Use the handy map and motel list enclosed. We encourage you to try the Grove Park Inn first, for this will enable you to stay right at the Convention site.

WHO PAYS THE REPRESENTATIVES' EXPENSES?

Hopefully, each representative's local church will cover his expenses for this vitally important Advisory Convention.

WHERE CAN WE GET MORE INFORMATION?

Write or phone, Dr. John Richards, P. O. Drawer 1024, Perry, Ga. 31069, 912-987-3133, or the Rev. Paul G. Settle, 3436 Wellington Rd., Montgomery, Ala. 36106, 205-262-5126.

THE PRESBYTERY AND YOUR SESSION—Cont.

jurisdiction in cases in which a church session cannot exercise its authority.

In 16-7(5) we read that the presbytery may visit local churches for purposes of inquiry and/or redressing grievances, and may dissolve the relationship of Elders and Deacons to a church, **provided there has been a hearing.**

The presbytery "visits" a church through an Administrative Commission, and in 19-3 it is stipulated that such a commission **must hold hearings.**

Now, the session is given the authority to call a congregational meeting whenever necessary (5-2) and this obviously means that the session determines the necessity of such a meeting and may call such a meeting whenever it pleases.

Turning in the *Book of Church Order* to 16-7(19), we learn that the presbytery may order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care. But, may presbytery do this in the local church without the session's permission and cooperation? What, anyway, does "order" mean? If a presbytery should interfere in the ordering of the life of a congregation must it not have declared the session as unable to exercise its authority and have dissolved that session?

Again, if presbytery seeks to forbid a session's calling a congregational meeting, may it do so without a hearing?

It seems that the only way a Session may be instructed not to call a congregational meeting is for that session to have been declared unable to exercise its authority. Such a declaration cannot be made until an Administrative Commission has investigated the situation, with hearings, and has dissolved the Session.

Perhaps, if the presbytery would thwart a congregation's actions toward separation, the proper procedure would be through Reference or Complaint, filed by the presbytery or a member of the church or session against the action of the session and/or the majority of the congregation (compare 115-1ff., 117-1; 118-1).

Your presbytery may request your session to delay action, but it may not **instruct** it to do so. At least, that's our opinion.

CONTINUING . . .

ALMOST 200 CHURCHES will have separated from the PCUS by the time the August Advisory Convention convenes. At this writing, more than 150 congregations have advanced toward the Continuing Presbyterian Church. Many more plan to vote in late July and August.

A NEW CYNTHIANA, KENTUCKY CONGREGATION has been formed, with 155 members, a new \$10,000.00 lot (already paid for), and plans to begin

immediately a sanctuary with seating space for 250 worshippers. The founding group represents the "majority" which voted last Spring to separate the Cynthiana Kirk from the PCUS, but who, when a vocal minority protested, quietly left the old church intact and began the new work.

THE JACKSON STREET CHURCH, of Alexandria, La., has gained its freedom from the PCUS. Louisiana Presbytery dismissed the church with its property. The congregation will affiliate with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod until the continuing Church is organized. The Rev. Michael Schneider is Pastor.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERY, organized on April 24, in Haysi, Va., already has taken under its care two Candidates for the Ministry. Frank Joseph Smith and James A. Jones, Jr., were examined and received on May 25.

THE FIRST "MISSION TO THE U. S." MISSION CHURCH has been organized in Gainesville, Fla. by ten enthusiastic families who are meeting regularly in homes for worship and Bible study. The Rev. Leonard Van Horn has been called as the Organizing Minister.

MAJOR MEDICAL INSURANCE, for separated ministers and their families, may soon be available with benefits comparable to those enjoyed under the Board of Annuities and Relief in the PCUS. Interested persons should send the names and birthdates of themselves and their dependents to the PCU office as soon as possible. A number of sound insurance firms are bidding for the contract which will be recommended to the continuing Church.

WOMEN OF THE CHURCH representatives will meet in Asheville, N. C., August 8, to consider programs and literature for the WOC ministry of the reborn Church. Invitations are being sent to the WOC councils in churches that have separated and/or have signed the Reaffirmations of 1973.

BIRMINGHAM PRESBYTERY (PCUS) appointed a Commission to meet with representatives of the Hueytown, Ala. congregation which voted unanimously to separate from the denomination. The Commission was given power to dissolve the Session and assume control of the church.

THE BRIARWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, of Birmingham, Ala., was declared "dissolved" by Birmingham Presbytery. The Presbytery appointed a committee to negotiate a property settlement with the large congregation that voted 543-0 to separate from the PCUS. The presbytery's action was only "on paper," however, and Briarwood spokesmen are confident that the congregation will retain full ownership of its property.

A NAME FOR THE NEW DENOMINATION will be chosen by the first General Assembly. If you have any suggestions, send them along to us. Some titles already submitted (about 30 have been received): Presbyterian Church of America, National Presbyterian Church, American Presbyterian Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church in the U. S.,

Free Presbyterian Church of America, Continuing Presbyterian Church, Great Commission Presbyterian Church. Let us hear from you!

CONVOCAATION TAPES are now ready. The entire Convocation of Sessions (13-plus hours) on reel-to-reel tapes is \$10.00. The six major addresses, on four cassettes, may be purchased for only \$6.00. Excerpts — the addresses, committee reports, etc. — may be bought for \$1.50 per cassette. Tapes are also available for free loan use.

ADVISORY CONVENTION BUS SERVICE from the airport to the Grove Park Inn in Asheville will be provided. Write the Rev. Harold Borchert, Waynesville, N. C. 28786, and let him know your arrival schedule.

A 72 HOUR PRAYER CHAIN is being organized to bathe the Advisory Convention in prayer. Scores of congregations will be praying at designated hours for God's blessings and guidance.

AUGUSTA-MACON PRESBYTERY (PCUS) recently voted to recognize the minority in the Vineville Church, Macon, Georgia, and awarded them the property and promised them a Pastor. The congregation voted 165-94 to separate from the PCUS, but the minority which petitioned presbytery to take the above action numbered only 64. The report is that only about 5 of these persons attend the church regularly.

A COMPLAINT TO THE SYNOD OF RED RIVER (PCUS) reads in part: "Whereas the Presbytery of the Covenant, at a regular stated meeting . . . approved with applause, a rising vote, and a majority of about ninety-five percent, a radical reinterpretation of parts of the Constitution . . . to wit: THAT 'all are saved . . .', THAT 'the Bible is not altogether reliable . . .', THAT 'the destiny of unbelievers in Christ is uncertain . . .'. The complaint requests the Synod to "reverse those proceedings" and "censure the delinquent Court."

On the road to Babylon . . .

THE 113TH. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

. . . defeated overwhelmingly an effort to instruct the Task Force on Hunger to "include as its number one priority the preaching and teaching by word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ;"

. . . could not make up its mind as to whether or not children should be admitted to the Lord's table;

. . . adopted a Theological Committee's paper on abortion which affirmed "the law should maximize the areas of personal freedom within which abortion decisions will be made, (but) we must always insist that such decisions be made in fear and trembling before God;"

. . . turned down an appeal to include the Ten Commandments in the proposed new confession;

. . . adopted a report on pornography which manifested a permissive attitude toward portrayals of nudity and sexual relations;

. . . approved a Church and Society paper that accused the U. S. of supporting "authoritarian regimes who have little sympathy for the rights of their people for justice;"

. . . turned down a phrase that encouraged opposition to U. S. involvement in Cambodia;

. . . refused to express "special concern for our Christian brethren" being persecuted in totalitarian lands;

. . . kept the Board of Annuities and Relief independent of the G. E. B.;

. . . allowed PEF to use Montreat after a strong effort was made to cancel their 1973 Evangelism Conference;

. . . expressed "grief over the separation of our brethren who have felt they must leave the denomination;"

. . . rejected efforts to change the proposed boundaries of Synod C.F and Synod Southeast;

. . . built the G.E.B. into the controlling machinery of the denomination;

. . . worked hard on the Lord's Day;

. . . approved in a no-contest voice vote the denomination's continuing membership in the National and World Councils of Churches;

. . . defeated soundly efforts to end union negotiations with the UPCUSA;

IN SUM: It is true that the 113th General Assembly was notable for the restraint manifested in its dealings with conservatives — particularly those conservatives who are a part of the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement. It is true that the Assembly can even be called "conciliatory." And we are thankful to God for this. We are thankful for any slowing of the denomination's retreat into idolatry. We are thankful for committed conservatives who strive against the swelling flood of heresy which threatens to engulf them. We are thankful for sweet-spirited men of "liberal" persuasion and their often sincere efforts to bridge the communications gap between warring factions in the Church.

But — we do not believe the 113th General Assembly represents a return to conservatism or even a very significant slowing of the liberal take-over of a once-great denomination. Did the Assembly drop the plans for a UPCUSA union? Did it reject the idea of a new confession? Was membership in the National and World Councils of Churches canceled? Was there an expression of repentance for the heretical doctrines promulgated in the denomination's publications and programs? No. Therefore we believe the General Assembly was simply another in a long, long succession of Assemblies that have contributed to the slow death of the PCUS.

The retreat toward apostasy was slowed, but not halted. The death march continues, the cadence called by liberal leaders. Ecumenical oblivion looms ahead for the Presbyterian Church, US.

GOD BEGINS WITH SMALL THINGS

"For who hath despised the day of small things?"

— Zechariah 4:10

God, to exhibit the more his power, begins with small things in building his spiritual temple; nothing grand is seen, which attracts the eyes and thoughts of men, but everything is almost contemptible. God indeed could immediately put forth his power and thus rouse the attention of all men and fill them with wonder; he could indeed do so; but his purpose is to increase, by doing wonders, the brightness of his power; which he does when from a small beginning he brings forth what no one would have thought; and besides, his purpose is to prove the faith of his people; for it behooves us ever to hope beyond hope. Now when the beginning promises something great and sublime, there is no proof and no trial of faith; but when we hope for that which does not appear, we give due honor to God, for we depend on his power and not on the proximate means.

Thus we see that Christ is compared to a shoot which arises from the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). So also he is compared by Daniel to a rough and unpolished stone cut off from a mountain (Dan. 2:45). The same thing has also been accomplished. If we consider what is and has been, the beginning of the growing gospel, we shall find nothing illustrious according to the perceptions of the flesh; and on this account the adversaries confidently despise us; they regard us as the offscourings of men, and hope to be able to cast us down and scatter us by a single breath.

— John Calvin

THE OPPORTUNITY OF CONTINUING

Excited! That's what we are.

Excited over the fantastic opportunities in the Continuing Church. Opportunities in every area of Christian service — evangelism, missions, church extension, women's work, youth work — you name it!

Just think of it! Just think . . .

— of worshiping in a church where Christ is exalted and His written Word is preached and taught every Sunday;

— of your children being nurtured in the warm truth of God, from the cradle to adulthood;

— of a Sunday School curriculum that is Christ-centered and Bible-based, and that applies the Word to everyday life;

— of youth programs that bring the kids face to face with the challenging realities and sovereign claims of Almighty God;

— of camps and conferences that provide honest fun in a context of Christian love and study and sharing;

— of women's work that involves the ladies in what Christ is doing;

— of social ministries that grow out of a right understanding of the radical results of the Fall and the need to reach out to needy men with the whole Gospel;

— of elders and deacons who are well trained in the faith and order and discipline of Christ's Church. Just think of it. And you'll get excited, too . . .

Let's continue together.

"There have been previous great crises in the history of the Church, crises almost comparable to this. One appeared in the second century, when the very life of Christendom was threatened by the Gnostics. Another came in the middle ages when the gospel of God's grace seemed forgotten. In such times of crisis, God, has always saved the Church. But he has always saved it not by theological pacifists, but by sturdy contenders for the truth."

J. Gresham Machen
(written in 1923)

CLOSET CALL

"And when thou prayest, enter into thy closet . . ." — Matthew 6:6

Praise God for the growing number of congregations who have separated from the PCUS.

Give thanks for the increasing evidence that churches are able to separate without losing their property.

Pray for the Lord's guidance upon all those who are planning and preparing for the Advisory Convention. We yearn for Christ Jesus to be magnified in everything.

Continue to remember those churches and ministers who are under great pressure from ecclesiastical and civil courts due to separation.

Pray that the words and actions of all those connected with the Continuing Presbyterian Church will manifest the love of Christ.

Pray for the ministers who are seeking pastorates, and for churches who are searching for ministers.

Keep Jack Williamson in your prayers as he chairs the Organizing Committee for the Continuing Church.

"Be filled with the Spirit . . . giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

— Ephesians 5:18,20

CASSETTE TAPES AVAILABLE

Free loan tapes, excellent for officers' meetings, small groups at church or in the home, family programs, etc., are now ready for your use. Just write or 'phone us with your order.

"Law and Procedure" (Convocation Address)	W. J. Williamson
"How The Gold Has Become Dim" (Convocation Address)	Morton Smith
"No Compromise Men" (Convocation Sermon)	William Hill
"The Honor of Christ" (Convocation Sermon)	John Neville
"Walk Worthy of the Gospel" (Convocation Sermon)	Frank Barker
Committee Reports — Convocation of Sessions	
"Why the Continuing Church is a Must"	Kenneth Keyes
"Issues and Answers"	Paul Settle
Columbia, S. C. Forum	Don Patterson, Jack Williamson, Paul Settle

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Rev. W.A. McIlwaine, PCU, AtL...M
 1220 E. Blount St.
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