

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY OUTLINE

*The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
You hold my lot.
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

Psalm 16:5-6.

REFORMATION

The Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages was rife with a corrupt and uneducated priesthood, selling of indulgences, and inability of the church members to have input. A number of reformers rose up, only to be suppressed. These included John Huss, Zwingli, and many others. **Martin Luther**, a German priest, is usually credited with leading the effort to reform the church. The Reformation ultimately resulted in a split with Rome, and the followers of Luther became known as Lutherans. **John Calvin** (1509-1564) brought the Reformation to its full and logical conclusion with the development of a system of theology and church government. A Frenchman who eventually settled in Geneva, Calvin insisted on a return to a Bible-oriented church. His simple and dignified worship stripped away ritual and liturgy. Church buildings were simple and unadorned. In theology, the emphasis was on the sovereignty of God, the authority of the scriptures, and the grace offered by Christ. Worship included the reading of scripture, prayers, a sermon, and the singing of Psalms exclusively with no musical instruments. Followers of Calvin were known as Calvinists and his theology is known as Reformed Theology. Churches under the Calvinist system were formed in many European nations, including France (Huegenots), Germany, the Netherlands (Dutch Reformed), Hungary, Czech Republic, England (Puritans and Congregationalists), and Scotland (Presbyterian).

SCOTISH REFORMATION

In Scotland, the reformation came in a dramatic way and was led by John Knox (1515-1572). A student of Calvin, he was exiled and then came home around 1559 to lead a thorough reform of the church (kirk) which completely transformed the Scottish society. An emphasis was placed on education to allow the people to study the Bible for themselves; reform of the morals, enforced by the church Sessions; and a zeal for religion. Many historians feel that this entitlement led to the seeds of democracy which came with Scots to America. The Lowlands of Scotland were fully Presbyterian, but in the Highlands many retained their Catholic faith. The Presbyterian Church was known as the Church of Scotland. A struggle ensued over the next 150 years over the role of the monarch in the life of the church. The monarch insisted that he or she should have the right to choose church leaders, including ministers and elders, as was true in the Church of England. Presbyterians insisted that the church govern itself, with the people having the right to choose their own leaders. James I said "A Scottish Presbytery fits with the Monarch as God fits with the Devil: No Bishop, No King."

COVENANTERS

As resistance to attempts by the monarch to control the church continued, a group of activists emerged. They began to enter into public covenants to show their resistance, and in time became known as Covenanters. The monarchs were constantly trying to enforce Anglican or Catholic worship forms and to influence the selection of leaders. In 1637, riots broke out when Charles I

introduced a new worship order, and the unrest led to the adoption of the National Covenant, signed by many thousands. The Solemn League and Covenant in 1643 led to a deal with the parliamentary forces in England, and resulted in the convening of the Westminster Assembly which developed the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. These have formed the basis of theology and government for most Presbyterians for over 350 years.

THE KILLING TIME

The Scots had an uneasy truce with the Parliamentary forces which ruled England under Oliver Cromwell after the English Civil War. The Puritans were fellow Calvinists. In 1660, Charles II reestablished the monarchy, and restored Anglican worship in Scotland. Any who resisted were persecuted. Hundreds of ministers were kicked out of their churches, and many began to meet in barns, caves, and fields. Known as "conventicles," these worship services were illegal, and were attacked by the King's army. This period of persecution and armed rebellion was known as the "Killing Time" in Scotland. Scots who believed in their rights to worship as they pleased were hunted down, tortured, or killed. Many believe that at least 20,000 lost their lives for their faith. The 1679 Battle of Bothwell Bridge broke the back of the Covenanter movement, and they became a small minority. The Killing Time came to an end with the coronation of William of Orange as king in 1688. The Presbyterian system was reestablished in Scotland. The remnant of Covenanters continued and established themselves as the Reformed Presbytery in 1743, separate from the established Church of Scotland.

ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERIANS

Dissent within the Church of Scotland continued, and a division occurred in 1733 when Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, Rev. Ralph Erskine and several other ministers withdrew to form the Associate Presbytery. The problems with the church which they protested included laxity in church discipline, opposition to their emphasis on evangelism, and patronage (continued efforts by the monarch to influence the selection of church leaders). Because the Associate Presbyterians seceded from the Church of Scotland, they were popularly known as "Seceders."

MIGRATION TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Ireland, although a colony of Britain, remained stubbornly Catholic and hostile. To better control the Irish, Elizabeth I had begun a colonization scheme to place English land owners and Scottish farmers and workers in the northern provinces of Ireland, collectively known as Ulster. This settlement continued for many years, and consisted of mostly Lowland Scots. Included in this area were strong settlements of both Covenanters and Seceders, and Presbyteries of both churches were formed. The troubles in Ulster between Protestant and Catholic continue.

MIGRATION TO AMERICA

As America became available for settlement, Calvinists from a number of European countries formed a major part of the migration to the new country, including Presbyterians. As conditions worsened in Ulster, perhaps 250,000 Presbyterian settlers migrated over a period of 200 years. In America we have invented the name Scots-Irish (Scotch-Irish) to describe the Lowland Scots who settled in Ulster and then came to America in later generations. They came in waves of settlement, influenced by both economic hardships and religious persecution:

1717 – 1718 Eastern and Central Pennsylvania

1725 – 1729 Western Pennsylvania

- 1740 – 1741 Shenandoah Valley of Virginia
- 1754 – 1755 Piedmont (Backcountry) of the Carolinas
- 1772 – 1776 Carolinas and Georgia

Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters) and Associate Presbyterians (Seceders) were part of each of these waves of immigrants, but they were always a small minority. The vast majority from the mainstream Church of Scotland formed the mainstream Presbyterian Church (General Assembly) in America. An Associate Presbytery was organized in 1753, and a Reformed Presbytery was organized in 1774. In actuality, the differences between the three types of Presbyterians in America were negligible in the 1700s, and they often worshipped together as union congregations. This changed around 1800 with the introduction of hymns into the General Assembly. Presbyterians played a very active role in the American Revolution, the large majority being Patriots.

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORMED 1782

Shortly after the Revolution, the first church union in the US occurred in Philadelphia when a majority of the Associate and Reformed churches merged to form the ARP Church. Small minorities of each group stayed outside the merger. The ARP was a national church, with congregations in almost all the states of the new nation except New England. As it grew, the ARP Church began to establish more Presbyteries and Synods. The Presbytery of the Carolinas and Georgia was formed in 1790. Growth was so rapid that it was divided in 1800 into First and Second Presbyteries. In 1803, the Synod of the South was organized at the Old Brick Church in Fairfield County, one of four regional synods formed. Later, the Synods drifted apart, and in 1822, the Synod of the South became independent as we know it today. The three northern synods merged in 1858 to form the United Presbyterian (UP) Church, which existed until 1958, when it merged with the General Assembly. There were efforts to reunite the ARP church and our northern UP brothers in the late 1800s, but sectional differences were still too great. Today, the ARP Church and the remaining Covenanters (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America) are the only remaining American denominations resulting from the Covenanter and Seceder movements in Scotland. The ARP church is not a division from the General Assembly – we have been independent in one form or another since the division from the Church of Scotland.

The ARP Church today is still concentrated in the Piedmont of the Carolinas, where the Scots-Irish settled in the 1700s. Periods of migration led to the geographic expansion of the synod. From 1820-1850, there was movement west into Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, and Kentucky. A migration to Florida in the 1890s resulted in a colony of churches there. In the past 40 years, the church has received congregations in the northeast and in Canada.

NOTES ON HISTORY OF FIRST ARP CHURCH OF ROCK HILL

CHURCH ORGANIZED IN 1895

- **Services begun in July by Seminary student Arthur Rogers**
- **Period of growth and development for Rock Hill**
- **Rock Hill in the “heartland” of the denomination**
- **Period of establishment of many “town” churches by the denomination**
- **There were at least three previous attempts to begin a work in Rock Hill**
- **26 charter members formed the church on November 19, 1895**

SANCTUARY COMPLETED IN 1898

- **Church purchased lot which was the apple orchard for the White family**
- **Sanctuary designed by C. C. Hook, Architect of Charlotte**
- **Funds raised from churches and individuals throughout denomination**
- **Sanctuary appears much as it did in 1898**
- **Addition to the rear added current choir loft, office space in 1911**
- **Educational Building completed 1930**
- **Additional classrooms added 1964**
- **Gym and Robinson Building completed in 1993**

FIVE PASTORS

- **Rev. Arthur Small Rogers (1895-1948)**
- **Rev. William Pressly Grier (1948-1963)**
- **Rev. Henry Lewis Smith (1963-1966)**
- **Dr. Robert J. Robinson (1967-2001)**
- **Dr. J. Barry Dagenhart (2001-2022)**
- **Associate Pastors: Rev. J. Barry Dagenhart**
 - Rev. Robert B. Elliott, III**
 - Rev. Bryan F. Bult**
 - Rev. Philip Bunch**
 - Rev. Andrew Shoger**
 - Rev. Jon M. Oliphant (Interim)**

HALLMARKS

- **Unity and stability**
- **Loyalty and service to the denomination**
- **Service to the community**
- **Daughter church – Rogers Memorial ARP**
- **Full-time Christian workers**