

## 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 largely uneducated priesthood, the selling of indulgences, and the inability of church members to have input. Masses were conducted in Latin, making it impossible for the people to understand the service. 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 a period of war and strife in Europe. **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 was exiled and eventually settled in Geneva, Switzerland, Calvin insisted on a return to a Bible-oriented church. His simple and dignified worship was in the local language, and stripped away ritual and liturgy. Worship included the reading of scripture, prayers, a sermon, and the singing of Psalms exclusively with no musical instruments. Church buildings became simple and unadorned. In theology, the emphasis was on the sovereignty of God, the authority of the scriptures, and the grace offered by Christ. 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 countries, including France (Huguenots), Germany, the Netherlands (Dutch Reformed), Hungary, the Czech Republic, England (Puritans and Congregationalists), and Scotland (Presbyterians). Although never gathered together as a single church, they are known collectively as the Reformed family of churches.

### SCOTTISH REFORMATION

In Scotland, the Reformation came in a dramatic way and was led by **John Knox** (1515-1572). A student of Calvin, Knox was exiled from Scotland but came home around 1559 to lead a thorough reform of the church, which led to major transformations in Scottish society. His emphases included education for all, allowing them to read the Bible for themselves; a reform of morals enforced by the church Sessions; and a zeal for religion. Many historians feel these reforms had long-term impacts, including the flowering of the Scottish Enlightenment and an influence on the development 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 became known as the Church of Scotland. Because the Presbyterian system of church government provided for election of Sessions and selection of ministers by the people, a struggle ensued over the next 150 years over the role of the monarch in the life of the church. The Kings insisted that they alone should have the right to choose church leaders, as was true in the Anglican Church. Presbyterians insisted that the church govern itself, through the will of the people. King James I stated: "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 of Scotland 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 across Scotland when King Charles I introduced a new worship service, and the unrest led to the adoption of the National Covenant, signed by many thousands of Scots. The Solemn League and Covenant 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 Catechism. These have formed the basis of theology and government for most Presbyterian bodies for over 350 years.

## THE KILLING TIME

The Scots had an uneasy truce with the Parliamentary forces which ruled England under Oliver Cromwell following the English Civil War. The Puritans, who had a large influence, were fellow Calvinists. In 1660, King Charles II reestablished the monarchy, and restored Anglican worship in Scotland. Any who resisted were persecuted. Hundreds of ministers who followed the Presbyterian system were kicked out of their churches, and many began to hold services in barns, fields, and caves. Known as "Conventicles," these worship services were illegal, and resulted in armed attacks by the King's army. This period of persecution and armed rebellion became known as the "Killing Time" in Scotland. Scots who insisted in worshipping as they believed were hunted down, tortured, or killed. It has been estimated that 20,000 Scots lost their lives for their faith. The 1679 Battle of Bothwell Bridge broke the back of the resistance and 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 allowed to be reintroduced in Scotland. A small remnant of the Covenanters continued and formed themselves as the **Reformed Presbytery** in 1743, separate from the Church of Scotland.

## **ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERIANS**

Dissension within the Church of Scotland continued, and a division occurred in 1733 when several ministers seceded from the church to form the **Associate Presbytery**. This group included **Rev. Ebenezer Erskine** and **Rev. Ralph Erskine**. The problems in the church which they were protesting 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**

The island of Ireland, although a colony of Britain, remained stubbornly Catholic and hostile to British rule. To better control the Irish, Queen Elizabeth I had begun a colonization scheme to remove the Irish peasants, give their land to English land owners, and populate the land with Scottish farmers and workers. This project was undertaken in the northern counties of Ireland, collectively known as Ulster. This area today is known as Northern Ireland, as is still a part of the United Kingdom. The settlement continued for many years, and consisted mostly of Lowland Scots. Included with the general population of Scots were numbers of Covenanters and Seceders. Presbyteries of both churches were formed, although they were always in a small minority compared to the mainline Presbyterians. The Scots in Ulster continued to suffer from persecution and control by the British.

## **MIGRATION TO AMERICA**

As North America became available for settlement, Calvinists from a number of European counties formed a major part of the migration to the new continent. Scots from Scotland were an important part of the settlement. As conditions worsened in Ulster, perhaps 250,000 Presbyterian settlers came to America from that province over a period of 200 years. In America, we have invented a name for these folks: Scotch-Irish or Scots-Irish. They were Lowland Scots who had lived in Northern Ireland for a time but remained thoroughly Scottish and Presbyterian in character. They can also be described as Ulster Scots or Irish Presbyterians. They came in waves of settlement, influenced by both economic hardships and religious persecution:

1717-1718 to Eastern and Central Pennsylvania

1725-1729 to Western Pennsylvania

1740-1741 to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia

1754-1755 to the Piedmont (Backcountry) of the Carolinas

1772-1776 to the Carolinas and Georgia

Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters) and Associate Presbyterians (Seceders) were part of each of these waves of immigrants, but they were always in a small minority. An Associate Presbytery was organized in 1753 and a Reformed Presbytery was organized in 1774. The main

body of Presbyterians, consisting of most of the immigrants from Scotland and Ulster, formed the mainstream Presbyterian Church. In actuality, the differences between the three bodies of Presbyterians in America were negligible in the 1700s, and they often worshipped together in union congregations. During the American Revolution, most Presbyterians were Patriots, as they had been fighting the King of England for generations.

### **ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORMED IN 1782**

Near the end of the American Revolution, a church union occurred in Philadelphia in which a majority of the Associate and Reformed churches merged to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP). Small minorities of each group remained outside the merger. The new denomination was national in scope, with churches in all the states of the new nation except New England. As growth occurred, Presbyteries and Synods were formed. There were four regional Synods: one in New York, one in Pennsylvania, one in Ohio, and the Synod of the South, formed in 1803 at the Old Brick Church in Fairfield County. Because of the extreme distances and difficult traveling conditions, the four Synods gradually drifted apart. In 1822, the southern churches (Synod of the South) became an independent denomination, which continues today as the General Synod of the ARP Church. The three northern Synods reunited in 1858 and were known as the United Presbyterian Church (UP). There were good relations between the southern ARP and the northern UP churches, but they never found a way to reunite. In 1958, the UP church merged with the General Assembly. The ARP Church and the remaining Covenanters (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America) are the only American denominations resulting from the Covenanter and Seceder movements in Scotland.

Today, there are well over twenty Presbyterian denominations in the United States, representing a broad spectrum of interpretations of the Calvinist belief system from liberal to fundamentalist. Most of these denominations resulted from divisions in the General Assembly or mainstream church, beginning as early as the 1830s and continuing today. The ARP denomination is unique in that it has never been a part of the main body of Presbyterians in the U. S., having been separate since the divisions in Scotland. Today the ARP church is heavily concentrated in the Piedmont of the Carolinas, where so many Scots-Irish settled in the 1700s. Periods of westward migration resulted in churches in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, and Kentucky. A migration to Florida in the 1890s resulted in a strong group of churches there. In the past forty years, the denomination has received congregations in the northeastern United States and in Canada.

Prepared for First ARP Church of Rock Hill, SC

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## **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

### **SIX SENIOR 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)
- Rev. Jon M. Oliphant (2023-present)
  
- Associate Pastors:   Rev. J. Barry Dagenhart  
                              Rev. Robert B. Elliott, III  
                              Rev. Bryan F. Bult  
                              Rev. Andy Stager  
                              Rev. Philip Bunch  
                              Rev. Jon M. Oliphant  
                              Rev. Keith Ginn

### **HALLMARKS**

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