



*News from the
Evangelical and Reformed
Historical Society*

DR. PHIL (Philip Schaff that is) bulletin inserts are



available on the ERHS website and can be downloaded for your parish use or for Association and Conference meetings.

A N N U A L M E E T I N G

October 9, 2009

[Peace United Church of Christ](#)

2714 W. Market St.

Greensboro, North Carolina 27403

9:00-9:30 Registration and Refreshments

9:30-10:00 Worship

10:00-10:45 "We Enter Into a Spiritual Union": 75th Anniversary of the E & R Church Merger" by Rev. Richard R. Berg

11:00-11:45 "History of Peace UCC and Brick Church"

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:30-2:30 Annual Business Meeting

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The Board of Directors will meet on Friday, October 8, 2009, 2:00-5:00 pm.

KEEP WATCHING the ERHS website for updates and information about the 2009 meetings and registration information.

www.erhs.info



FROM THE ARCHIVIST

Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church

By Rev. Richard R. Berg

The evening of June 26, 1934 witnessed an historic event in the development of Christianity in the United States. Two denominations, each with German and Swiss cultural and religious roots, processed into Zion Evangelical Church in Cleveland, Ohio at 7 pm. to consummate an organic union establishing the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Why and how these two denominations came together is an interesting story, a story that reflects the ecumenical spirit alive in first half of the 20th century and that reflects the understanding of church and discipleship in the two bodies.

The spirit of ecumenism in the first half of the 20th century grew out of the formation of a number of interdenominational and international organizations in the late 19th century whose purposes included cooperation in addressing social problems and cooperative missionary efforts. These organizations brought together individuals from diverse ecclesiological, liturgical and theological traditions who, in working together, began to talk about the meaning and mission of the church. Such conversations eventually resulted in the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, the Conference on Life and Work at Stockholm in 1925, the World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne



E&R Merger Synod 1934

in 1927, the Jerusalem Conference in 1928, the establishment of the Federal Council of Churches in the United States in 1908, and the Interchurch World Movement of North America in 1918. These conferences, among their varied work, fostered an interest in and conversation about the unity of the church and the nature of relations between denominations and communions (Dunn 279-280).

Both the Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church were active participants in these ecumenical ventures, their delegates returning to their respective General Conferences and General Synods urging greater participation and visible action in carrying out the reunion of Christ's church. Discussions within each denomination about the meaning of being the church led to new, or renewed, understandings of the church as

a fellowship of believers in Christ whose call is to foster the reign of God on earth rather than only establishing order and truth. These discussions within each denomination quickly became informal conversations between each other as groups of clergy gathered in Baltimore in 1927 and Appleton, Wisconsin in 1928 to share understandings and visions of the church. Further evidence of the interest in ecumenism and cooperation in both denominations is seen in the formation by the Evangelical Synod of the Commission on Closer Relations with Other Church Bodies in 1929 and by the Reformed Church of the Permanent Commission on Closer Relations and Church Union authorized by the General Synod of 1914.

The interest in interdenominational cooperation and union evidenced in the

first quarter of the 20th century did not signal the start of a new movement. Church union was important in the Reformed Church in the United States from the late 18th through the 19th century. Conversations were held with Moravians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and the Reformed (Dutch) Church in America. While none of these conversations resulted in union, the Reformed Church in the United States did manage to reunite itself when the Independent Synod rejoined the Synod in the late 1830's, the Ohio Synod rejoined the General Synod in 1863, and the North Carolina Classis rejoined the General Synod after the Civil War. With the experience of union conversations and its own reunion, the Reformed Church was ready for substantive discussions with possible union partners. Joint meetings with the Reformed (Dutch) Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America produced no results by 1927. Despite probable disappointment, the Reformed Church Commission on Closer Relations and Church Union reported to the 1929 General Synod that they had held conversations with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in 1928 and that a tentative plan of union was being developed for consideration by the respective committees of each group. They were approached by the Evangelical Church and by the Evangelical Synod of North America both

of whom expressed an interest in joining the talks. A poignant example of the feeling of clergy toward the union discussions is a letter written by Rev. John Henry Stepler (1841-1928) to Mr. Schroeder and dated March 12, 1928: "...Will begin with words of a great Italian who is dead nearly 300 years - 'She does move.' I saw unexpected evidence of it today. Rev. J. Sommerlatte and I attended a meeting today, of the results which you may hear more in years to come. At least it looks that way now. Yes, and J.S. and I had a hand in it. And we 2 are happy over it. So I think are the 2 x 14 ministers present at the meeting. All the Reformed side who could be present were there. So were the 14 of the Evangelical Synod. And all the 28 (or 30) were of one mind, agreed and enthusiastic - that we ought to unite!...My speech in favor of the merger was most warmly applauded. As far as it can be done we all are inclined to try it in Cleveland. But the ultimate desire is for the 2 denominations to become one. I am inclined to think that it will succeed..." (Stepler). Although the Evangelical Church withdrew from the negotiations, the remaining three bodies continued to meet and developed a "Plan of Union" which was presented for consideration and action to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States at its 1929 meeting (Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod...1929 33-34).

The introduction to the

"Plan of Union" verbalizes the motivation for union. "It is evident that the Christian Churches throughout the world are disposed to enter into closer fellowship and co-operation with one another...In view of these facts and movements, in which one may see clearly the guidance of the spirit of our Lord and Savior, who prayed for all 'who believe in me' that they all 'may be one,' it behooves the Churches, especially those of the same land and of the evangelical faith and order, to enter into negotiations for closer relationship with the purpose of attaining organic union. Believing that each denomination exists not for itself but as an agency for the advancement of the kingdom of God, which is greater than any single Church or than all the Churches taken together, and for which each denomination is to live and labor, and if need be to die..." (Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod...1929 34).

Organic union was a call from God to become one. The three denominations, believing this, presented the "Plan of Union" to their respective bodies. It was vital to the representatives from each denomination that the plan be embraced enthusiastically. In the words of Dr. George W. Richards, "Personally, I should be sorry to have this Union adopted without enthusiasm; to have it adopted by a small majority. Union

can be of value only when it is spontaneous, vital, enthusiastic. It cannot be effected diplomatically or legally, by any sort of coercion. It must be effected intelligently, spiritually, vitally..." (Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Committee of Twenty-One 4). Unfortunately, the United Brethren felt there were too many obstacles for them to continue participation and in 1930 they withdrew from the negotiations. While the Reformed Church approved the "Plan of Union," it was not enthusiastically embraced by the Classes. The Acts and Proceedings of 1932 reports the following outcome on the vote to approve the three-way "Plan of Union": "27 Classes are favorable to the Plan of Union, although with some reservations; 7 Classes are definitely opposed; 6 Classes postponed action; 11 Classes desire union with groups other than those proposed in the Plan of Union; and other Classes are so indefinite in their action as not to be listed" (84). The lackluster results resulted in the Commission on Closer Relations recom-



George W. Richards (1869-1955)

mending that the "Plan of Union" not be presented for further comment or vote but that negotiations continue with the Evangelical Synod

and a revised "Plan of Union" be developed for presentation to the Classes at their spring 1931 meetings.

Before negotiations could proceed, the Reformed Church was invited to send representatives to a meeting of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the Reformed Church in America to discuss union between the Presbyterian and Reformed bodies. While the Reformed in the United States did not send official delegates to the meeting, they did send two visitors to listen and observe the discussion. This put on hold further negotiations with the Evangelical Synod. However, in May and June 1931, the Presbyterians and Reformed Church in America ceased negotiations. With this action, the Reformed Church in the United States reopened union negotiations with the Evangelical Synod. At a meeting on February 12, 1932, a final "Plan of Union" for the two denominations was completed and presented to the two governing bodies for discussion and vote, the Reformed Church General Synod meeting June 21-28, 1932 and the Evangelical Synod General Conference meeting in Cincinnati, October 3-10, 1933 (Trexler 55).

The Acts and Proceedings of General Synod...1932 of the Reformed Church in the United States records the action taken: "...The Rev. J. Stuart Hartman then moved that the General Synod adopt the Plan of Union as read by Dr. Leonard, and that it be sent down to the

Classes of the Reformed Church for their approval. After the motion had been properly seconded, Dr. George W. Richards addressed the General Synod on the reasonableness and advantages of the proposed union. The Plan of Union was further discussed. The vote was taken and the plan approved by a rising, unanimous vote. Synod stood to sing 'Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow,' and prayer was offered by Dr. J. C. Leonard. The General Synod authorized the Stated Clerk to send a telegram to Dr. C. W. Locher, President of the General Conference of the Evangelical Synod of North America, advising him of the unanimous action just taken" (91).

After the 1932 General Synod, the "Plan of Union" was referred to each of the Classes for action. The final result of the votes was: 51 Classes in favor, 3 Classes in favor but with minor conditions, 4 Classes rejected the plan, 1 Classis declined to take action (Acts and Proceedings of the Third Special Meeting of the General Synod 13). With these re-

sults tabulated before the meeting of the Evangelical Synod General Conference and a majority of the Evangelical Synod Districts voting approval, the final action to approve the plan was taken by the Evangelical Synod delegates at their 1933 meeting. With these final approvals in place, the date for union was set for June 26, 1934 in

Cleveland, Ohio. The last meeting of the Reformed Church in the United States as a separate body was held in Eighth Reformed Church and Pilgrim Congregational Church (a future portend) and the last meeting of the Evangelical Synod of North America was held in Zion Evangelical Church. On the evening of June 26, the two groups processed into the sanctuary of Zion Evangelical Church where the formal announcement of union was proclaimed and a service of Holy Communion held. The next morning, June 27, the



Louis W. Goebel (1884-1973)
2nd E&R President 1938-1953

first General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church was held in the newly named Zion Evangelical and Reformed Church. Officers for the new denomination were elected, interim governing procedures voted on, an Executive Committee elected, a Committee on Constitution and Charter as well as several other committees appointed. The new denomination had begun, yet ever before it, was the

Christ command, "That they may all be one." Even before the new constitution was declared in force at the 1940 General Synod, conversations had begun between members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches about closer relations and possible merger.

That is part of the legacy of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, a willingness to die in order to further the reign of God. Another legacy was pointed out in an article in the July 11, 1934

issue of Christian Century: "In one respect, however, this merger promises more than most of those which have occurred previously. The spirit which animated the move was remarkable for its generosity and its irenic faith. If this spirit should become contagious and sweep across the world we should witness a vast crumbling of denominational walls. When the two bodies became convinced that union was possible and desirable, the leaders simply arranged to hold the annual convocations of their churches together and held a service of unification. There was no haggling, no prolonged and delicate negotiation, no creedal formulation ground out point by bitter point, no legalistic debate over constitution... Such confidence in good faith and good will is rare enough among the leadership of Christian churches and its conspicuous appearance in this instance is a harbinger of good things to come. So trustful a demonstration of the spirit of brotherhood is in itself a major contribution to Christian unity" (916).

Works Cited

- Acts and Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States 22 May 1929. 32-39.
- Acts and Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States 21-28 June 1932. 83-91.
- Acts and Proceedings of the Third Special Meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States 26 June 1934. 13-16.
- Dunn, David, et al. A History of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Philadelphia: Christian Education Press, 1961.
- "Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Committee of Twenty-One." Reformed Church in the United States, Schaff Building, Philadelphia, Pa. 16 Jan. 1930.
- Steppler, John Henry. Letter to Mr. Schroeder. 12 March 1928. MS. John Henry Stepler Papers, Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.
- Trexler, Wilbur E. "A Historical Approach to the Evangelical and Reformed Church Merger." Diss. Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 1943.
- "Union on a Basis of Mutual Confidence." Christian Century 11 July 1934: 916.

ACCESSIONS HIGHLIGHTS

October 1, 2008 to September 1, 2009

Local Church Records

- St. Luke's Reformed (Dublin, PA)
- Second Reformed (Reading, PA)
- St. John's Reformed (Bangor, PA)
- Emanuel Reformed (Lansford, PA)
- First Reformed (Bethlehem, PA)
- Grace Reformed (Fountain Hill, PA)

Manuscript Collections

- Harold Christian Kropf (1903-1987) a lay person and participant in the Commission for Christian Social Action European Seminar highlighting war relief (1951)
- Johann Rahauer music manuscript book, 1806 (purchase)
- Frantz Family Papers 1876-2009
- Rev. Arthur E. Antal
- Rev. Arthur Henry Wegener

Denominational Records

- Shenandoah Association non-current records

Artifacts

- Oil portrait of Rev. Emil S. Nagy, Jr. (1909-1984), pastor of the Hungarian Reformed Church (First UCC), Bridgeport, CT
- Stained glass window depicting the Reformed Church escutcheon

2007-2008 Contributions to ERHS Beyond Membership

\$10-\$25

Ruth B. Akers
 Rev. Richard Berg
 Kurt & Mary Schaller Blaufuss
 Richard S. Brueseke
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Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord!

By Rev. Richard R. Berg, ERHS Archivist

Fortunately for us, most of the German and Swiss Reformed clergy who established the German Reformed Church in the United States did not follow the dictates of Ulrich Zwingli preventing the use of music in the church. In addition to the Bible, one of the most books most frequently brought with the 18th and early 19th century Reformed German and Swiss immigrants was a hymnal. This love of music and hymns was passed down to the next generation of U.S. born clergy.

Among this generation was Jonathan Rahauer (1764-1817) who was born in Dover Township, York County, Pennsylvania to Daniel and Barbara Rahauer. He worked on the family farm until answering a call to ministry in 1785 when he entered into study with Rev. Dr. William Hendel. Rahauer studied theology and ancient languages with Hendel until 1789. He first served several Reformed churches in the Shamokin, Pennsylvania area on both sides of the Susquehanna River as a licentiate but was not ordained until 1791. In 1792 he received a call from the Hagerstown Charge at that time consisting of ten churches in Maryland and Franklin and Adams counties, Pennsylvania. In addition to his pastoral work, he also published a commentary/study guide for the Heidelberg Catechism in both English and German and was used for the instruction of confirmation classes.

The Historical Society has very little information about Rev. Rahauer and nowhere is there any mention of his interest in music or of any musical abilities. It was a surprise when searching a used book megawebsite for items related to the Reformed Church to find listed a music book by Jonathan Rahauer dated 1806.



After conferring with some Board members, the items were deemed important enough to authorize purchase. Through the generous gifts of Rev. Judith Meier, Society secretary, and Rev. Linda Gruber, Society president and her congregation, St. John's, Phoenixville, Pa., the music book was purchased with a substantial discount given by the seller, Mr. Thomas Cullen, Rockland Bookman, Orchard Park, NY.



The music book is paper bound and contains 24 pages of manuscript music with the words written in beautiful German script below. The pieces appear to be hymns or religious songs, many of them marked "Tenor" above the music. Work will continue in order to identify the tunes and translate the hymns, comparing them to published hymnals. This acquisition enables the Society to preserve and make accessible an important piece of early music history as well as illuminate part of Jonathan Rahauer's life that was hitherto unknown. Thanks to the donors an important piece of Reformed Church and music history is now available for study and research. Thanks to the work of Chris Beldan, Associate Librarian, Lancaster Theological Seminary, the entire music book may be viewed online at

<http://dspace.lancasterseminary.edu/dspace/handle/10118/135>

Enhancing the Future of ERHS – Benefiting Our Benefactors Today

Planned Giving Options in the ERHS Endowment Program

By Janel Widdowson, ERHS Financial Consultant

As many of you already know, ERHS has undergone a redesign of our endowment program. Through our investment platform with Capital Bank and Trust and with the assistance of our investment advisor, ING Financial Partners, we are able to provide our donors with multiple options for giving and supporting the work of ERHS.

We are a non-profit organization and as such, donations you make to the ERHS Endowment Fund are tax deductible as charitable contributions. But there may be other giving programs that may benefit our benefactors in an even greater way.

For friends who would like to make larger contributions, there are several giving programs that may provide greater benefits than would otherwise be realized with standard charitable giving. For example: there may be income tax advantages for your donations; you may be able to receive regular income payments for your lifetime or you may elect a return of principal option, you may be able to avoid paying capital gains taxes on appreciated assets, or you may be able to positively impact your estate tax situation and potential probate costs.

Of course the benefits to ERHS are obvious. Our endowment funding and increases in income for our operating budget will enable us to continue and hopefully expand our programs and services.

Planned giving options range from programs that allow donors to retain actual income produced by their gift to programs that pay out a fixed dollar amount. There are also programs that allow the donor to designate ERHS as the beneficiary of the annual income produced with the remaining balance passed to the donor's family at a reduced gift-tax cost.

For more information on donations and planning giving programs, please contact the ERHS office (717-290-8734 Monday-Wednesday) and request a brochure detailing the planned giving options, or contact the Society archivist, Richard Berg at 717-290-8704.

As always, we thank you for your support of ERHS and hope that, together, we can continue to carry out our mission of collecting, preserving, and making accessible the history and heritage of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

WE WELCOME YOUR INPUT

in helping us to locate foundations and other potential supporters who might aid the Society in our mission and work. Please send your thoughts and ideas to Rev. Richard Berg at the ERHS email address:

ERHS@LANCASTERSEMINARY.EDU



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