

HISTORY

of

Greenwich Presbyterian Church

Early Beginnings

Too much credit cannot be given to Mrs. Gilbert Moxley for her untiring and successful efforts to establish a Presbyterian Church in the Greenwich neighborhood, and for her nearly sixty years of unremitting labor in that Faith.

Aminta Elizabeth Moxley, wife of Gilbert Irland Moxley, was the daughter of Benjamin Douglass, and was born at Newport, near Port Tobacco, in Charles County, Maryland, on April 1, 1777. On April 22, 1802, she was married to Gilbert Irland Moxley, and came with her husband to "The Grove", Greenwich, Virginia, where she lived until her death on December 31, 1858.

Soon after coming to Greenwich, Mrs. Moxley, herself perhaps the only Presbyterian in the neighborhood, began to hold religious services in her home, inviting in friends and neighbors. So popular became these services, that soon a small log building was erected to act as a place of worship. In 1810, a meeting took place in this little Church, in which a regular Congregation was organized, and if we are to believe certain records as found in the Library of Union Seminary, Richmond, this meeting of 1810 marks the beginning of our present Congregation in Greenwich Presbyterian Church, and comes down to us in an unbroken line, with variations of course.

By 1812, the Congregation had outgrown its place of worship, and the original log Church was torn down and its place taken by a new and larger log building, which was to serve for nearly forty-six years as a place of worship. This new log Church stood on the north-west corner of what is now the present Greenwich Church property, and at some unknown period, a well was dug close to its west wall; probably for use of the Congregation, but gradually came into use as a community affair.

In 1811, Mrs. Moxley lost her husband and was left a widow

with four little daughters, which she could be seen dutifully leading to Church each Sabbath. Her entire life was devoted to the Presbyterian Cause, and when she passed away on December 31, 1858, she had lived to see the completion of the new Brick Church, and was laid to rest in the shadow of its walls, in the first grave to be made in the Church Yard.

Of Ministers who acted as supply in the second Log Church, none is perhaps so well known as Rev. Thomas Bloomer Balch, son of Rev. Stephen Bloomer Balch, founder and Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Georgetown, D. C. Born in Georgetown in 1795, Rev. Thomas Bloomer Balch was a graduate of Princeton, and in 1829, was appointed as Missionary and Stated Supply to Virginia. In this capacity, he served until 1836; from 1833 to 1835 of that time he was at Greenwich. He became so fond of the neighborhood, that he purchased a farm in this locality, on which he lived for the balance of his life. From time to time, he acted as Supply for the Log Church when the pulpit was unoccupied. He died on February 14, 1878, and is buried in the Church Yard of the present Brick Church. He is described as being a very learned but particularly eccentric man.

The following Pastors of the Warrenton Presbyterian Church participated at the second Log Church at Greenwich; Rev. J. M. P. Atkinson, 1841 to 1848, (was known to be at Greenwich in 1843), Rev. S. P. S. Wall, 1848 to 1851. Rev. J. W. R. Pugh, 1852 to 1868. It is also thought that an early Pastor was Rev. W. Williamson.

At some unknown date, probably during the time of the second Log Church, Greenwich Church came under the Warrenton Church as a mission, and this condition was to continue until 1867.

The Church is Built

In 1833, Charles Green, an Englishman from Shropshire, came to Savannah, Georgia, where in time he established himself in business and became quite prosperous. That he was interested in Presbyterianism is shown by his attendance at the Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah. Having a sister living in the Greenwich neighborhood, he used to visit her at times, and eventually become so fond of this part of the country that he purchased land here which he named "The Lawn", and to which he added further tracts from time to time until he had 470 acres, on which he raised English sheep. He also married at Greenwich as his second wife, Lucy Irland Hunton, a daughter of Thomas L. Hunton, and a grand-

daughter of Mrs. Gilbert Moxley, who had started Presbyterianism at Greenwich.

Both Mr. Green and his wife became very much interested in the efforts of the Presbyterians of Greenwich, and to further their cause, purchased for their use, three acres of land, adjoining the site of the Log Church, and set about getting funds for the erection of a large Brick Church. Mrs. Green raised considerable of the funds necessary; a Mr. Wright of Savannah contributed generously, and Mr. Green made up the ballance; the sum required being between \$3,000.00 and \$4,000.00. In 1854, the Congregation met to see the start of the foundation of the new Church, bringing with them picnic lunches. Mr. Spillman was the contractor and religious services were held in the open air by a Rev. Mr. Weems. By 1858, the new Church was completed and ready for occupancy, and the Congregation moved from the little old log building which had served their purpose for 46 years. However, in 1859, Dr. Moxley wrote to Mr. Green in Savannah, advising him that the walls of the new Church were beginning to bulge; that the steeple needed further bracing and that the roof was sagging and leaked badly.

Mr. Green replied under date of March 7, 1859, and requested that the contractor be required to brace the walls with three tie rods; to build brick foundation pillars under the floor, placing octagonal columns on them to the gallery and further columns to the base of the steeple; also to rebuild the roof in such manner that the arched ceiling could be used instead of a flat ceiling, and proper braces installed. All of these alterations were made, as may be noted in the Church today. He also notified Dr. Moxley, that matting for the Church was being shipped from Liverpool on the ship "Ann E. Hooper", bound for Baltimore.

That Mr. Green gave a deed for the original three acres of land on which the Brick Church was built, there is not the slightest doubt, even though no record of the deed can be found. The surmise is that the book in which it was recorded, was one of those destroyed when Federal troops burned the Clerk's Office at the Brentsville Court House in the early sixties. Proof that such a deed was given is shown by the fact that when the Northern troops attempted to seize the newly built Church for use as a hospital, Mr. Green objected strongly, stating that the deed therefor contained a draw-back clause, to the effect that the property should return to the heirs if it ceased to be used for religious purposes, which, said he, "would make it English property, as I am an Englishman". The Church

Page 4

was not molested, which is the only instance of its kind that is known in this part of the country.

The log building (no longer used as a Church), was, however, seized at this time and used as a hospital by the Northern troops, and about the end of the war was burned, whether accidentally or otherwise, it is not known.

On October 11, 1856, Thomas L. Fitzhugh, Michael House and B. D. G. Moxley, Trustees, purchased for Greenwich Church, from James H. Moore and Harriet C. Moore his wife, for \$55.00, a tract of land estimated to be between one and two acres, and described as follows: "bounded by the Greenwich Church lot on the West and three other public roads on the other three sides." In other words, this was a narrow strip of land directly in front of and extending clear across the entire front of the Church lot, and its purchase would seem to have been extremely important. The Log Church stood in the north-west corner of this strip. Today, the Leach home is in the north-east corner, and as this belongs to "The Lawn", a part of one of the roads probably originally ran between it and the Church property. For further details regarding sale of the Moore tract, see Liber 24, folio 295 of the Land Records of Prince William County, Va.

It will be noted that Thomas L. Fitzhugh and B. D. G. Moxley had both been ordained Elders under date of June 15, 1856. Michael House had been ordained as an Elder before October 11, 1856; the exact date not known. All of these men must have been very prominent in church affairs, for they were all Trustees on date October 11, 1856, and all are mentioned as the Elders in charge of the newly created Greenwich Presbyterian Church on its separation from the Warrenton Presbyterian Church, October 18, 1867.

Rev. John W. R. Pugh (he usually signed himself Bro. Jno. W. Pugh), came to Warrenton in 1852, probably about the time the Presbyterian Church of that place was destroyed by a tornado. He was installed November 17, 1855, which was the same year the corner stone of the new Warrenton Church was laid. He therefore saw the erection of the two Presbyterian Churches under his care; the one at Warrenton 1855-1856 and the one at Greenwich 1854-1858.

On October 18, 1867, when the Congregation of the Greenwich Church was granted permission by Rappahannock Presbytery to become a separate and independent Church, Mr. Pugh continued to act as their Pastor, in addition to being the Pastor of the Warrenton Church, until the date of his resignation on September 27, 1868.

Page 4

The Church Is Organized

The following "Organization of Greenwich Church" was made by order of the Session on March 30, 1895, and placed in the beginning of the Session Book of 1894-1920. In as much as the Session Book of 1867-1894 has been lost or destroyed, we would have no certain record of the independence of Greenwich Church if it had not been for the thoughtful act of the Session in having this copy made. This also proves the loss of the old Session Book took place after March 30, 1895.

"ORGANIZATION OF GREENWICH CHURCH"

"The Memorial from certain Members of the Warrenton Church, living at and near Greenwich, presented at the Last Meeting of Presbytery, was taken up and on motion it was resolved that the said Memorialists, viz; G. W. Fitzhugh, Wm. McIntosh, W. S. Blackwell, G. W. Riley, Ann Elizabeth Riley, Nathaniel House, Ann V. House, Mary A. Marsteller, Ann B. Marsteller, Wm. H. Ellis, Jno. Reid, Bettie Low, Michael House, Julia Blackwell, Ann D. Hunton, Lucy I. Green, Hannah E. Moxley, Louisa S. Moxley, B. D. G. Moxley, Caroline B. Florance, T. L. Fitzhugh, Ann MacIntosh, C. G. Chichester, L. C. Catlett, S. G. Catlett, E. M. Catlett, Bettie Fitzhugh, G. H. Milligan, S. McCormick, A. W. Chichester, E. C. Chichester, L. A. Gordon, and M. A. Marsteller (34 in Number) be and hereby are constituted into a separate church organization, to be known as Greenwich Church & that B. D. G. Moxley, Michael House & T. L. Fitzhugh, Ruling Elders in the said Warrenton Chh. be hence forth regarded & treated as Elders in the said Greenwich Chh. & that all questions of averages of salary to their late Pastor, Rev. Jno. W. Pugh, be submitted to Ruling Elders Jas. V. Brook & B. D. G. Moxley for adjustment & discussion --- Done in Session of Presbytery of Rappahannock, Oct. 18, 1867."

A True Copy from Records

Jno. W. Pugh,
Stated Clerk

A true copy from the old Sessional Record Book --- Made March 20th, 1895, By order of Session.

J. W. Riley, Clerk of Session

Teste

A. B. Carrington, Mod:---

A Succession of Pastors

Mr. Pugh was followed at Greenwich by Rev. Albert B. White, who served from April 21, 1869, to November 22, 1877. Then came Rev. Uncas McClure whose term was December 1, 1873, to April 21, 1880, followed by Rev. Theodoric P. Epes, June 5, 1881, to September 19, 1883.

It was during the stay of Mr. Epes that Charles Green died in 1881, and under the terms of his will dated May 27, 1880, it was found that he had left to Greenwich Church, five acres of wooded land lying directly South and adjoining the Church lot, "for the special purpose of furnishing a sheltered approach to said Church from the South"; said land to be used for no other purpose unless for extension of the Church building or erection of a school house in connection with same, and under the Elders; no trees to be cut except dead ones for use as firewood for the Church, and no land to be used for cultivation. The Executors of said will later made a deed for the land in question, based on the terms of the will, and under date of March 24, 1884. See Liber 35, folios 49-51 of the Land records of Prince William County, Virginia.

Mr. Epes was followed by Rev. Alexander B. Carrington, who was installed October 14, 1885 and served until April 30, 1896. This was a lean time in the finances of the Church, and matters did not progress.

On September 7, 1896, Rev. J. Louis McClung came to Greenwich, and served there until November 5, 1901. It was during his stay, on October 18, 1899, that with the assistance of Greenwich Church, Oakland Church in Wise's Chapel, Woolsey, Virginia, was organized, with Mr. McClung as Supply. Later, due to shifting of the Congregation, Oakland Church was moved to Haymarket, Virginia, where they held their services in the Haymarket Baptist Church. However, Oakland did not prosper, and on July 11, 1920, was ordered dissolved by Presbytery, and its then eleven members transferred to Greenwich Church.

It was also during the stay of Mr. McClung, and with the assistance of Greenwich Church, that White Hall Church at Nokesville, Virginia, was organized on April 12, 1900, by order of Chesapeake Presbytery, with Mr. McClung as Supply. Greenwich lost four members transferred to White Hall at this time. However, White Hall did not prosper and was dissolved by order of Presbytery on November 12, 1910, and its Congregation, consisting of 26 Communicants and five Non-Communicants transferred to Greenwich.

Rev. Vincent Palen Merrill came to Greenwich as Supply in April of 1901, and only stayed until 1902. He was followed in May of 1903, by Rev. C. W. Hollis, who stayed until October 18, 1906. It was during the latter's stay that the Moxley Memorial Manse was built.

The Moxley Memorial Manse

For some years previous to 1906, it had been the custom to rent property for use of the Pastor as a Manse. Finally, the question of a permanent Manse began to be raised, and committees were appointed to look into the matter and bring in reports. Some available places were found, but lack of funds prevented any real action. Finally, the third Mrs. Charles Green, then of Baltimore, interested herself and raised a fund of about \$400.00, but this amount was finally used to furnish the Manse, and she herself gave the amount of \$2500.00 necessary to pay for the land and buildings. The following taken from a clipping from the Christian Observer of June, 1906, is of interest as giving the details of its dedication:

DEDICATION THE MANSE AT GREENWICH, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Saturday, May 26th, 1906, was indeed a red-letter day in the history of Greenwich Church, Prince William Co., Va., Chesapeake Presbytery. For ten or more years a great and deeply felt want of the church was a manse for the pastor. The financial resources of the congregation were so limited that it seemed an object impossible to obtain. It was made the subject of much anxious thought and earnest prayer, especially by the oldest and most devoted of its members.

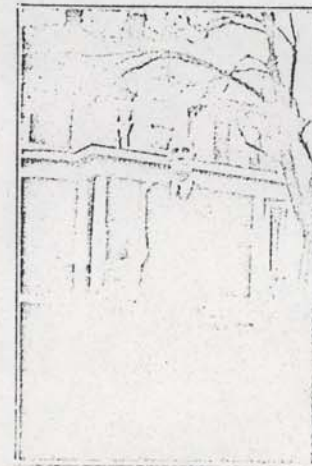
The fund was started with the small beginning of one dollar. The kind and helpful interest of Mrs. Charles Green of Baltimore, Md. (who has been a life-long friend of the church, and whose good deeds and generous charities are well known) was engaged. Mrs. Green took the dollar and interested other friends, obtained an amount of upwards of \$100.00 which was set aside as a furnishing fund, and gave the entire amount, \$2,500.00 needed to buy four acres of land and provide the necessary fencing and outbuildings.

The house being completed, and in large part furnished, Saturday, May 26th, 3 P.M. was the time appointed for the dedication of the building as a manse.

In due time notice was given and invitation was sent to distant friends and extended to the community to attend. The dedication consisted of an hymn sung by the company present, and prayer by the pastor, C. W. Hollis.

Likewise through the goodness of Mrs. Charles Green, by special arrangement, there was present Mrs. Layyah Barakat, a native Syrian, born in the mountains of Lebanon, and herself the fruit of Foreign Missions, redeemed to the Savior in a remarkable manner through the instrumentality of Dr. Jessup, at Bayrut, and who has been in this country now twenty-four years, her home being in Philadelphia. She gave a very thrilling and instructive account of her conversion and life until she came to this country twenty-four years ago.

A large company of friends, and almost the entire community were present and greatly enjoyed the occasion of pleasant fellowship which was a real benediction to the soul.



Mr. Cooke, beloved pastor, standing in front of the Moxley Memorial Manse.

The Reverend J. Royall Cooke

Late in 1906, Rev. J. Royall Cooke came to Greenwich and served for two years as Supply, before being regularly installed as Pastor in December, 1908. He has the distinction of having served in this church for a period of 33 years, until his retirement on December 15, 1941.

Mr. Cooke found his congregation scattered and somewhat divided. He quietly and steadily brought them together again. The recent growth of our church rests squarely on the foundation that he built with patience and maintained in the face of many discouragements down across the years.

Mr. Cooke spoke last at Greenwich on October 10, 1948, when Mr. Winn was installed as pastor and the Sunday School Building was dedicated. He died at his home "Mt. Ephraim", near Goldvein, Virginia, on May 16, 1949.

The cherry communion table now in use in the church was given by his friends as a memorial. His most real memorial is in the grateful memories cherished in the hearts of those in the congregation who remember his ministry.



Rev. and Mrs. T. K. Mowbray

The Reverend Thomas K. Mowbray

There was no pastor following Mr. Cooke's resignation until May 14, 1944, when Rev. Thomas K. Mowbray was installed. An expert court stenographer who entered the ministry in his mature years, Mr. Mowbray held a brief but vigorous pastorate at Greenwich. He was an untiring visitor, paying little attention to the physical handicaps under which he labored. The initial impetus toward the Sunday School Building came from him, though he did not stay to see it started. He resigned on May 1, 1946.

Following Mr. Mowbray's resignation, the church was supplied by Mr. William Ramkey, a student at Union Theological Seminary. Stirrings of new life in the church were evident under his leadership, culminating in the building program described below.

The Sunday School Building

For many, many years, the church had no separate building for use of the Sunday School; the various classes of which were taught in the Church building proper. For a long period, due to bad roads in the community, it had been the custom to close the Sunday School for three months during the Winter, but with coming of the automobile, good roads came into being and the closing period for the Winter months was discontinued. By 1948, it was found that the Church building could not accommodate the number of scholars, and further accommodations would have to be found.

Another feature which gave some concern, was the absence of an adequate place to hold suppers or entertainments. It is true that the Modern Woodmen would always kindly let us have the use of their hall across the road, but this building was simply a primitive old school house, which had been roughly fitted up, and was really too small to accommodate any large gathering.

Accordingly, about February of 1948, the Congregation began to agitate the question of putting up a building on their own property, to serve the purpose of a Hall for the Sunday School. Plans were drawn up for a two story structure 36 x 60 feet; the lower floor to contain hall, kitchen and heating plant, and the upper floor to have a narrow hall running from front to rear and ending in a large room across the building. Three

rooms for scholars were on each side of this hall. This building was to be located between the grave yard fence and the public road on the West, and the front was to be on line with the front of the Church. In order not to detract from the appearance of the Church by looming too high, the lower floor was placed four or five feet below the surface of the ground. Construction was of cinder block, and allowance was made for later placing a veneer of some kind over same. The cost was approximately \$12,000.00, but much work and material was donated by some members of the Congregation. Home Missions contributed \$1000.00 to this cause. Dedication of the Hall was made on October 10, 1948.



Rev. Albert C. Winn, Out-going Pastor

The Reverend Albert C. Winn

On October 10, 1948, Rev. Albert C. Winn was installed Pastor of Greenwich Church, on the same day the Sunday School Building was dedicated. During the five years of his pastorate, the church was the center of Potomac Rural Parish, which included also the Bealeton, Brentsville, and Jehoash (Catlett) Presbyterian Churches.

Under the Larger Parish Plan, students from Union Theological Seminary alternated with Mr. Winn, enabling each of the four churches to have services each Sunday. A Parish Council was formed, and various cooperative projects were carried out. Designed to provide supervised field training for the Seminary students and to help small rural churches at the same time, this plan attracted attention all over the Assembly and was featured in the moving picture *Seedtime and Harvest*, which had a wide circulation throughout the South. Students who served in Greenwich Church under this plan were: Mr. William Ramkey, Mr. Charles Book, Mr. Tom Foley, Mr. Joseph Flora, Mr. Charles Barnett, and Mr. Neil Leach.

A congregational meeting on March 8, 1953, accepted Mr. Winn's resignation as pastor, to take effect the end of May of the same year.

The New Manse

In the Spring of 1951, it being considered no longer economical to put further repairs on the 45-year-old Manse; the Congregation decided it would be better to sell same and to put up a new building. Other features which brought this decision, were the excessive cost of installing an adequate heating system, and also the flat ground upon which the Manse stood, which defied drainage in Winter. Accordingly a purchaser for \$11,700.00 having been found, possession was given on May 1st.

A lot about a half mile further east from the site of the old manse was given by Raymond Spittle and his wife, and on this land, a new manse was erected at a cost of \$18,000.00. The manse is of stone veneer construction, a story and a half in height. Eight rooms and two baths are provided in such fashion that a pastor with a small family can have a complete apartment on the first floor, while a larger family can utilize the two upstairs bedrooms as well. Automatic heat, a pine-paneled study, a model kitchen with all the latest conveniences, a full basement and under-the-porch grange—all combine to make the manse one of the most beautiful and convenient in the South. It was dedicated with a simple service on August 2, 1951.

The Church Building Itself

Our history would hardly be complete without some thing regarding the interior and exterior of Greenwich Church.

On some very early date, probably soon after completion of the new Church in 1858, a pipe organ was placed in the arched space directly back of the pulpit. Being before the days of electricity in the community, this organ had to be pumped by hand, and Elder George Wood recounts how this used to be his job when a boy. Considerable trouble was experienced by mice building nests in the organ, and soon after 1900, when a part of the ceiling fell, the organ was totally ruined. The ceiling was soon replaced with a metal one, and on November 22, 1903, the Session instructed the Ladies' Aid Society (forerunner of the Woman's Auxiliary), to purchase a new reed organ; the old organ to be taken in as \$50.00 credit on same. This reed organ was used until about 1949, when its place was taken by the Hammond Electric Organ, gift of the Ellis Family.

Originally at the extreme front edge of the platform, and directly in front of the pulpit; used to be a low solid fence, back of which the Choir sat. This fence was removed early in the nineteen hundreds, and the Choir was placed in the south-east corner where the electric organ is today.

All that can be gathered about the original pulpit was that it was massive and beautiful. Why it should have been removed, we have no idea. The Session under date of October 22, 1909, extended their thanks to a Mr. Kronk for the gift of a pulpit and a reading stand. This is the pulpit in use today; the reading stand is now doing duty in the Hall.

On July 2, 1910, the Session extended thanks to Miss Mabel Wagner for her gift of two marble tablets containing the Ten Commandments. These are now on the wall, in the arch-way originally occupied by the pipe organ.

There are three marble tablets in the south end of the Church; that in the left corner being in memory of Lucy Irland (Hunton), second wife of Charles Green, and a member of the Congregation until her death in 1867. The tablet in the right corner is in memory of Charles Green, and a tablet on the west wall and near the south corner, is in memory of Jane Alexander Milligan, founder of the Ringwood Academy. A small bronze tablet, in the center and just below the Ten Commandments, is in memory of Aminto Elizabeth Fisher, third wife of Charles Green, and donor of the Moxley Memorial Manse in 1906.

On the outer rail of the balcony and facing the pulpit,

used to be an extremely large circular gilt clock, which now seems to have disappeared. This clock had not run for years.

It is natural that at the building of the present Church, an opening should be made to the public roads, both on the East and the West, for hauling needed materials for construction. To the North, directly in front of the building, was a narrow strip of land, owned by James H. Moore, and while this was soon purchased by the Church in 1856, it was at the beginning not feasible to make an entrance to the north. For many years, the side entrances were used exclusively for carriages and horses, and on each side of the Church yard proper, were erected stiles modeled after doorways in England, for use of those alighting for services. A careful study of some of the large oak trees nearby, will disclose iron rings, almost grown over by the bark, to which horses used to be hitched. These picturesque old stiles still remain as they were.

On August 2, 1908, it was ordered that a new fence be erected around the Church Yard. This would indicate that there had been a previous one but evidently the iron fence of today was erected in 1908. It used to be customary to have "clean up day" once a year and at that time, some of the men would repaint the fence.

It was possibly about 1908, that complaint was made that the public were making a thoroughfare through the east and west gates; also that it was not possible to keep stray cows and horses out. Accordingly, both gates were permanently closed up, and a new gate was opened directly in front of the Church, which could be closed with an iron gate at will.

In 1952 a beautiful stone entrance was erected by Mr. and Mrs. John Ellis as a memorial to their only son Gordon, who gave his life in World War II.

In the same year damage caused by termites led to an extensive repair and renovation program in the church building. The entire floor, which had been of wide pine boards, had to be removed, and new joists were laid. Most of the wainscoating had to be replaced. While the floor was removed, an automatic furnace was installed. Then new oak flooring was laid on a substantial sub-floor. A center aisle replaced the old double aisles which led directly from each door to the front of the church. The church was lightened by changing the pews and wainscoating from mahogany to ivory in color. The pulpit furniture was refinished and in some cases replaced. Carpeting and choir curtains, given by The Women of the Church, completed the redecoration. The result is a place of quiet reverence and radiant beauty.

The Future

Greenwich Church will soon enter her second century in the present building. She faces the future with high hopes and a spirit of adventure. From one woman's loyalty long ago there now stands a congregation over 200 strong with a full and vital program for all ages within the membership. Feeling that her large and wide-spread congregation requires more of a pastor's time than the original Parish set-up has provided, Greenwich has joined with Brentsville to seek a pastor for the two churches, without help from Home Missions. It is hoped, however, that when pastors have been found to live at Greenwich and Bealeton, a different Parish set-up can be arranged, continuing the fruitful cooperation between Presbyterians in this area.