

America!

Shortly after the organization of the Associate Presbyterian Church (remember: Erskine/Marrow/Free-offer/Civil-protestation) in Scotland, Associate congregations in New Jersey, New England, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia requested ministers. Two arrived to form the Presbytery of Pennsylvania in 1753. Others formed the Presbytery of New York in 1776.

On the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanter) side, congregations had been here since 1685, due to the "Killing Times." But the first ministers did not arrive until 1752, under the auspices of the Presbytery of Ireland. In 1774, a new American presbytery was formed, the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery.

In America, these two groups began exploring joining as early as 1754, with formal discussion beginning in 1777 to discuss a basis of union. Representatives of these presbyteries met November 1, 1782 to come together to form the Associate Reformed Synod. Ten were Associates and four Reformed. There was an urgent need, with more than fifty elder-led congregations waiting upon ministers.

This body ratified the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as its doctrinal standards, and committed to Exclusive Psalmody for worship singing. The synod flourished, and after just twenty years found it necessary to multiply into four Synods: the Synod of New York, the Synod of Pennsylvania, the Synod of the Carolinas, and the Synod of Scioto (now Ohio).

The first subsequent meeting of the General Synod, with delegates from each of the annually meeting Synods, met in Pennsylvania in 1804. This General Synod established a theological seminary to complement the one that the Associate Church had previously established. In 15 years, it trained 96 ministers. That seminary still exists today (Union Seminary in New York), but sadly went liberal a long time ago.

Sadly, the General Synod did not hold together for long. Even before the Synod had formed, the Presbytery of New England had been expelled for loose doctrine and practice. The Synod of Scioto withdrew in 1820, and then in 1822 the Synod of the Carolinas withdrew and re-formed as an independent Synod of the South—which is the body of which Hopewell remains a member. At that time, it consisted of First Presbytery, Second Presbytery, and the Presbytery of Georgia. This separation was due not only to the difficulty of travel to the meeting of the General Synod, but also due to Southern concern over worship practices in other Synods that was not according to the standards of the church. Still, it occurred peacefully.