

## Varieties in Iowa

Presbyterianism in Iowa, as everywhere else, forms a pattern as variegated as a Scotch plaid. The predominating wing, of course, is the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, while the second largest is the United Presbyterian Church of North America. In addition, there are six other varieties today, as follows:

### EIGHT VARIETIES OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN IOWA

<i>Church</i>	<i>Congre- gations</i>	<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Members</i>
United States of America	313	315	79,168
United	57	62	10,367
Reformed	4	4	386
Bible	2	2	63
Cumberland	1	1	110
Orthodox	1	1	64
Colored Cumberland	1	1	—
Associate	1	1	—
	—	—	—
GRAND TOTAL	380	377	90,158

### *Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.*

The early Iowa Old School churches were sustained by the Board of Missions, and those of the New School by the American Home Missionary Society in cooperation with the Congregationalists until 1861. Thus the Iowa Presbyterian churches

have been both conservative and liberal in doctrine.

On the lively question of slavery the New School Presbyterians, reflecting a long-term association with the Congregationalists, spoke out more freely against slavery than did their Old School brethren. But it remained for the Free Presbyterians (some of whom were formerly Old School and some New School) to adopt the more extreme views of the abolitionists. There were at least four of these churches in Iowa: at Wittenberg, Yellow Spring, Quasqueton, and Cedar Creek though the precise location of the last-named has not been ascertained. The Iowa Presbytery was formed under the Free Synod of Cincinnati. After the Civil War, Free Presbyterians generally disbanded, joined with New School Presbyterians, or reorganized as Congregational churches. The present Wittenberg Congregational Church, which was organized in 1865, was founded originally in 1854 as a Free Presbyterian congregation by Rev. Thomas Merrill from southern Ohio. The pastor also organized the Wittenberg Manual Labor College at the site of this colony, six miles north of Newton.

The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. achieved the following organization for Iowa: Synod of Iowa (Old School), 1852-1869; Synod of Iowa, South (Old School), 1857-1869; Synod of Iowa (New School), 1853-1869. With the re-

union of Old School and New School Presbyterians in 1870, the Iowa synods were reduced to two and reconstructed as Iowa North and Iowa South (1870-1881). This arrangement lasted until 1882, when the present state-wide Synod of Iowa was organized, with eight presbyteries. Today there are ten.

The Presbyterian German Synod of the West was erected at Dubuque in 1914 and still functions. Other presbyteries were constituted by the Czechs and the Welsh. The Cumberland Presbyterians formed a Synod in 1857. When reunion with the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., was achieved in 1906, most of the 32 Cumberland congregations were assimilated. A further union took place in 1920 between the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and assimilation soon operated among the remaining Iowa Welsh congregations. Discussion of the goal of Presbyterian union continues down to the present.

#### *United Presbyterians*

The second largest unit of Iowa Presbyterianism today is the United Presbyterian Church of North America. The Scottish antecedents of this body — the Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters) and the Associate Presbyterians (Seceders) — were transplanted to America in the 1750's. In 1782, a majority organized as the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, while minorities con-

tinued under the two original names. In 1858 the United Presbyterian Church was born of the merger of the Associate and Associate Reformed bodies though some ministers and congregations witness separately to the present.

The United Presbyterian Synod of Iowa was formed in 1860. There are 57 United Presbyterian congregations in Iowa today. The largest church in any branch of the Iowa Presbyterian family and the second largest in the entire United Presbyterian fold in America is the Westminster church in Des Moines, with 2,511 communicant members reported in 1951.

#### *Cumberland Presbyterians*

Until 1906, Iowa's third largest Presbyterian group was the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Not only had the Cumberland people organized the first two Presbyterian congregations within the limits of the present-day state of Iowa, but they also supplied a dramatic close to the 118th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., which met at Des Moines in 1906, by voting to reunite with this parent body. The question handled was, should the Cumberland people return to a church from which they had been eliminated a hundred years previously in Kentucky? But the reunion proved unstable, and there has been a continuing Cumberland Presbyterian Church since 1906. The denominational headquarters today are at Memphis, Tennessee, while McKenzie,

Tennessee, is the site of Bethel College and a theological seminary. The church's national strength in 1951 was 1,026 congregations with 80,140 members. When Bethel College was remodelled in 1922, new women's dormitories were provided through the bequest of John T. Laughlin of New London, Iowa, amounting to \$100,000.

There is but one Cumberland congregation in Iowa today — Shinar, near Pleasant Grove in Des Moines County, with 102 members. Organized on August 10, 1839, with ten members, Shinar has had a continuous existence since that date.

#### *Colored Cumberland Presbyterians*

As the Cumberland Presbyterians picked up in strength after 1810, numerous converts were made among the people of color in the South. After the Civil War, the Negroes favored a separate church body, and in 1869 were legally set apart.

The first General Assembly of the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church was held in 1874. There are colored people of this faith in almost every state of the Union, though Iowa has but one congregation — that in Marshalltown. In June, 1951, the 77th General Assembly of this denomination convened at Marshalltown, the second session to be held in Iowa in a quarter of a century.

#### *Reformed Presbyterians*

In seventeenth-century Scotland the Reformed religion was staunchly defended by the Reformed Presbyterians or "Covenanters" against royal tyr-

anny. Throughout the period before the American Revolution, Scottish Covenanters and Seceders (also Presbyterians) came over to the colonies in large numbers. Efforts to form a single ecclesiastical body known as the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod were partly successful in 1782, though some ministers and congregations persisted on the outside under the original names. One of these bodies, the Reformed Presbyterian, today has four congregations in Iowa: at Clarinda, with 84 members; Hopkinton, 54; Morning Sun, 97; and Sharon, a rural church near Morning Sun, with 151 communicants. Together these congregations make up the Iowa Presbytery, which is attached to the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

#### *Associate Presbyterians*

There is but one Associate Presbyterian congregation left in Iowa today — the church at Washington, which is really the net remainder of one of the oldest congregations of any denomination in the state. Although the formal organization of the Washington church dates only from 1858, when its members decided not to aid in forming the United Presbyterian Church of North America, actually its roots go back to 1837, when Associate Presbyterian Seceders began to arrive in present-day Washington County from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The first pastor was Rev. George C. Vincent, under whose guidance the church at

Washington was formed in 1841. In eight or nine years of work among Washington County settlers Vincent added hundreds to the rolls of his churches before returning to the East.

*Orthodox Presbyterians*

Controversy between Fundamentalists and Modernists resulted in the organization of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936 by those who had dissented from the alleged modernism in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Some, suspended from the parent body, formed the so-called Presbyterian Church of America, but were enjoined from use of this name. Since 1939 the name "Orthodox" has been used. One congregation — at Waterloo — is maintained in Iowa.

*Bible Presbyterians*

Another group named the Bible Presbyterian Church split from the Orthodox Presbyterians in 1938. Nationally, the Bible organization has 148 ministers with congregations in 17 states. According to the Committee on National Missions of the Bible Presbyterian Synod, there are two Bible Presbyterian congregations in Iowa: one at Cono Center, near Walker in Linn County, with 38 members; and the other, formed in 1951, at Woden in Hancock County, with 25 members.

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