

# WHO IS THE SYNOD ??? YOU ARE THE SYNOD !!!

(Richard G. Petersen, Synod Commissioner)

For the first 16 years of my Presbyterian involvement, I heard about the Presbytery of Western New York, the Synod of the Northeast, and the General Assembly. As far as I was concerned these groups were the "They's" in the organized structure of the Presbyterian Church. Who belonged to them and what they did was a complete mystery.

The Book of Order gives us the definitions of the Presbytery, the Synod and the General Assembly. In the Book Of Order, the Presbytery is a corporate expression of the church consisting of all the churches and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament within a certain district. In our case the certain district is "Western New York". Therefore, the Presbytery is all the Presbyterian churches and Ministers of Western New York.

The Synod is the unit of the church's life and mission which consists of representatives from not fewer than three Presbyteries within a specific geographic region. Synod is the intermediate governmental unit responsible for the mission of the church throughout its region. When a synod meets it shall be composed of commissioners elected by the Presbyteries. The number of commissioners from each Presbytery shall be divided equally between Elders and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

The General Assembly is the highest governing body of the Presbyterian Church and is representative of the unity of the Synods, Presbyteries, Sessions, and Congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The congregation elects the session in each church. If you are elected to the Session you will be ordained as an Elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). When actually serving on a session you are known as an active Elder. Once you have been ordained as an Elder, you remain so for your lifetime unless you are disciplined and stripped of your ordination.

The session in turn elects commissioners to the Presbytery for at least one year, preferably two or three years. The session elects lay members of their congregation as commissioners to the Presbytery. Some commissioners should be elders, and as such, may be considered for election to Synod or General Assembly. In order to be elected by the Presbytery as a Commissioner to the Synod and/or a Commissioner to the General Assembly, you must be an ordained elder.

The " Who of the Synod" is really "You of the Synod".

YOU

|

Members of the Congregation

|

Session of each congregation

---

Composed of elected members who are then ordained as Elders  
in the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.).

|

Presbytery of Western New York

Made up of ordained Ministers of the Word and commissioners,  
elected by the session of their congregation.

|

Synod of the North East

Made up of ordained Ministers and ordained Elders elected by their respective Presbyteries.

I

General Assembly

Made up of ordained Ministers and ordained Elders elected by their respective Presbyteries.

YOU are the voice of the Synod via the Presbytery. In this democratic system, you first begin as a member of a congregation within the boundaries of Western New York. As a member of the church you elect the Session members or you may be elected and serve as a member of the Session. If your congregation elects you to be ordained as an elder and/or elects you as a Commissioner to the Presbytery, you will have a voting voice on the floor of the Presbytery representing the voices of your congregation. Therefore, as a congregation member your voice is carried to the Presbytery by the Commissioner you elect or by you serving as an ordained Elder and elected Commissioner.

WHEN YOU BECOME INVOLVED, THE STRUCTURE OF OUR CHURCH DOES TRULY "ENABLE THE GREAT ENDS OF THE CHURCH: THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE SALVATION OF HUMANKIND; THE SHELTER, NURTURE, AND SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD; THE MAINTENANCE OF DIVINE WORSHIP; THE PRESERVATION OF THE TRUTH; THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND THE EXHIBITION OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TO THE WORLD".

For a detailed explanation of the duties and responsibilities of the Synod please refer to the Book of Order, G-12.0000 to G-12.0306, chapter XII "The Synod".