

Preface

The genesis of this manual, entitled *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, was a plea from the regional home missionaries and the chairmen of presbytery home missions committees who attended the 1999 Regional Church Extension Conference, sponsored by the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The Committee also was sensitive to the need for such a document, but was concerned about three related questions: (1) Who was available to write it? (2) How would it be possible to have the requisite time for study and the composition of such a work? (3) Assuming these first two questions could be answered, where would we find someone who was sensitive to the diversity of theological opinion and practice within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), and who, at the same time, would be able to produce a document that would enhance the already existing confessional and ecclesiastical unity in the OPC?

The General Secretary and the newly called Associate General Secretary of the Committee began collecting information that they believed could be useful in the production of this manual. The Committee began to think that a manual on Orthodox Presbyterian church planting endeavors could be produced under its oversight. At its December 2000 meeting, the Committee granted the General Secretary, the Rev. Ross W. Graham, a sabbatical to produce such a document.

Throughout the writing process, Rev. Graham sought to remember the Committee's encouragements that any document produced be both principled (that is, Biblically and confessionally faithful) and practical (which is defined in the OPC as practice that flows out of Scripture itself). Rev. Graham presented the first draft to the September 2001 meeting of the Committee, where it underwent an initial critique and revision. Several individuals within the OPC were also contacted for their input. Additionally, the manual underwent a rigorous review and subsequent revision at the November 2001 Regional Church Extension Conference by OPC presbytery leaders in church planting. At its December 2001 meeting, the

Committee conducted a final review and approved the manual for publication.

The Committee is grateful to God for all who have put so much of their time into the theological and stylistic editing necessary to produce this document. Most of all, we are grateful to our Lord for giving us servants like Rev. Graham and his wife, Nikki, who labored countless hours in various aspects of the production of this document. We thank God for Rev. Graham, whose godly passion to serve the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by planting and nurturing churches faithful to Christ is an edifying testimony to us all. Although this manual is written by Rev. Graham, it should be apparent that this document is one in which a cross section of the OPC has had significant input.

It is with considerable rejoicing that the Committee presents this manual to the OPC. We believe that this document is Biblically principled, OPC-practical, theologically faithful, and sufficiently sensitive to the various points on which we disagree. Our prayer is that our sessions, presbyteries, presbytery home missions committees, and church planters will receive and make extensive use of this manual in planting new Orthodox Presbyterian churches and making more and spiritually stronger disciples of Christ, to the ever-increasing glory of God in the twenty-first century.

*The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension
December 12, 2001*