

# Presbyterian churches commended on efficient merger

By MILDRED CARSON

PLAINFIELD — A new church, the United Presbyterian Church of Plainfield, will be created in Plainfield one week from today. It will begin its existence with more than 1,000 members from the combined congregations of the First Presbyterian Church and the Grant Avenue Presbyterian Church both of which will be dissolved on the same date.

Members of both congregations voted overwhelmingly for the consolidation last Sunday and the Elizabeth Presbyterian confirmed the vote unanimously Tuesday. Then, in an unusual and infrequent gesture, the Presbytery also commended the congregations on their efficient and well-thought plan of merger.

"Although the need for mergers of urban churches is fantastically great," the Rev. Thomas Green, a member of the Presbytery's National Commission, said, "the accomplishment is almost all." The Rev. Mr. Green, associate pastor of the New Providence Presbyterian Church, moderated the merger committee meetings.

He noted that the consolidation is the first between any two Presbyterian churches in the history of the Elizabeth Presbytery.

THE MEMBERS of the United Presbyterian Church will worship at the E. Front Street building of the former First Presbyterian Church. The consolidated church will continue to support the Grant Avenue Community Center and will make an effort to insure that the day care center at the church now conducted by the Family Development Center will continue to function.

The actual merger of the two congregations was accomplished in just 33 days after the vote. It was held the day early in May when both churches voted to draw up a plan of consolidation and asked that it be completed in 60 days.

A committee of 20 members, including two teen-agers and representing the two congregations, went to work in earnest on May 9, to draw up a plan and to define the mission and goals of the new church.

UNTIL THE ANNUAL congregation meeting next January, the boards of the new church will be formed of the combined boards of the two merging churches.

One of the first activities of the new congregation will be to seek a new minister through its combined pulpits. The consolidated church plans to call for an assistant pastor as well as a new minister through its combined pulpits.

A community ministry will be supported at the Balmans House, a part of the Grant Avenue Presbyterian church property.

William G. French, assistant clerk of session, who has been active in the consolidation planning, pointed out there has been more and more recognition in recent years that the church is not an isolated institution but has responsibilities to the community and to the world.

CHANGES in the world today and the response to them have resulted often in declining church membership and financial support to the church. The yet church members, with increasing awareness of human problems, have been asked to recognize the cost of these needs in effort and money in order to plan of consolidation and asked that it be completed in 60 days.

So the two congregations considered consolidation as a means for achieving goals they had set for themselves as a United church — goals they believed impossible to achieve separately.

WHEN THE Rev. Bruce L. Blackie, pastor of the Grant Avenue Church, left for a new congregation in March, the active role of the church in the community was during the summer months. Although the geographic and sociological ties were strong, there were

denominational differences. Discussions between the First Presbyterian Church and the Grant Avenue Church began in November last year and at the congregational meetings in January this year each church selected a committee to begin exploring possibilities.

Initially questionnaires were sent to each member to sound out feelings. Opinions were requested. There were numerous committee meetings and two in-journal congregational meetings certain amount of during, to pull the two churches together. The merger was approved by a vote of more than 19 to one.

THE MAIN stumbling block in most merger plans is sentiment. French said, "It taken history that reaches back to 1888 when it was organized as Hope Chapel, by the Crescent Presbyterian Church which is nearly 150 years old. But the members there also put it in 1930. The first service in the United Presbyterian Church will be held in the E. Front Street sanctuary on July 4 at 10 a.m.

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## Sheriffs to discuss funds disbursement

NEW BRUNSWICK — New and Freeholder Director George J. Oldowski refused to sign the Atlantic City ordinance which determine why they are being passed by federal funds and law enforcement agencies when the money is going to sheriffs in other states.

The 21 sheriffs of New Jersey will discuss whether their office, as daily constituted law enforcement agencies, are entitled to federal law enforcement funds, said Middlesex County Sheriff John Flanagan yesterday.

He said federal funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) are going to other sheriffs in most of the states but New Jersey funds are being intercepted by the State Law Enforcement Planning Agency.

Flanagan has steadily maintained that sheriffs are law enforcement agents and entitled to the funds. He said an attorney will review the matter tomorrow and make legal determination of the status of sheriffs as law enforcers.

The matter has come to light especially lately because of a SLEPA refusal of a grant to a sheriff for a mobile crime laboratory and also by the rejected application of Flanagan for federal narcotics funds. The Chiao, according to reports in sheriff maintains he has the New York Times and News-papers that the Board of Freeholders thinks otherwise.

CHOU SUEI TERMS NEW YORK (AP) — Communist Chinese Premier Chou En-lai says that withdrawal of U.S. troops from Formosa is a key to the restoration of laboratory and also by the rejected application of Flanagan for federal narcotics funds. The Chiao, according to reports in sheriff maintains he has the New York Times and News-papers that the Board of Freeholders thinks otherwise.

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