

Where Were You In '82?

A History of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Elder Arthur W. Ritter

Good morning and welcome to Sunday School this morning!

Grace and Peace from all of our 32 neighboring churches, worshipping fellowships, and specialized ministries in the Presbytery of Nevada – and from the churches in the eleven presbyteries in the Synod of the Pacific.

I am Art Ritter – a lifelong Presbyterian of the northern strand of Presbyterian churches:

- Macalester Presbyterian Church in St Paul, Minnesota when it was part of the Presbyterian Church USA – and then the United Presbyterian Church USA (where Georgia and I were married);
- Fremont Presbyterian Church in Sacramento California (where our oldest daughter Elizabeth was baptized) as the USAF moved Georgia and me to Mather AFB, there (I didn't know Jim HH then);
- Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alamogordo NM (our youngest daughter was born there and baptized by my brother, a Presbyterian minister back in Rochester Minnesota);
- Emanuel Fellowship in Tucson, Arizona – a church of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod which we began with seven other families in our home;
- Another Westminster Presbyterian Church – also RPCES - in Ft Walton Beach, Florida;

- ... and finally, First Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas,— a part of the Presbyterian Church (USA) - where Georgia and I have now lived and been members longer than any other place and church in all of our lives.

It was the youth program who wrapped their arms around our two teenagers when we moved here that kept us in this church (the first we “shopped” when we got here). It was James Stuhmer who was our new members class teacher that introduced us to this church – and it was Marge Bellow who brought us out of the pew by suggesting that we join the Sunday School program for adults.

Introductions ...

- **Arthur Ritter**, First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas
 - Elder and Deacon, Clerk of Session, Treasurer of the Board of Deacons
 - FPC, LV Commissioner to the **Nevada Presbytery**
 - Member, Committee on Preparation for Ministry
 - Member, Equipping Ministries
 - Vice Moderator, now Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada,
 - NV Presbytery Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific.
 - Member, Synod's Mission Personnel Committee.
 - NV Presbytery delegate to and Board Member of the Religious Alliance In Nevada – a consortium of five mainline denominations advocating God's will to the state government for social justice in Nevada.
 - Polity (business model) wonk – in real life, too.

And you? ...

Here is my association with the subject of our church's history and its polity.

A life-long Presbyterian, I have experience in two different Presbyterian polities – and at several levels in each.

Overview

- Your personal religious history since 1982...
- **Our Denomination's organizational history and its context**
- Where are we? – What are we? ... now?
- What do we believe and how did we come to it?
- Where are we going?

In this six week experience, we will explore these subjects together.

Sorry I wasn't here last week – I was in Reno preparing for our semi annual meeting of Presbytery in the First Presbyterian Church in Carson City – amid the grieving for those lost in the shooting at the IHOP restaurant – and then the crash at the Reno Air Races.

I trust that you and Peter Wilson had a good time trading your personal histories – just as Tip O'Neil mused that "all politics is local" – so all history is personal – and we will try to make this history - your story.

Last Sunday ...

- About *your history* ...
 - How long have *you* been a Christian?
 - How long have *you* been a “Presbyterian?”
 - Are you ordained?
- About *First Presbyterian Church’s history* ...
 - Are we really the “first” in Las Vegas?
 - When did we start?
 - Who were the leaders?

So, how did it go last Sunday?

Did you delve into these questions? Get any good answers that bear repeating?

I don’t know whether Peter shared this or not – but we aren’t really the “first” presbyterian church in Las Vegas – the older one failed to endure. So we are really the second.

We weren’t even the first in Nevada – that honor was celebrated by “Carson First” whose 150th birthday was celebrated this past June and followed by worship into the community senior centers and assisted living homes for services.

This Sunday ...

- When you talk history -- its context, context, context!
- About the denomination (we are only 28 years old!)

Today we will talk about our denomination – which is as old as Georgia’s and my time in this church – starting as we got here 28 years ago.

I suppose that it isn’t very clear just how our denomination got to be what it is today – or how it relates to the rest of those presbyterians...

So where do we fit in?



Where do we all fit in?

Well, lets have a look ...

As recounted in Acts 2

¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ...

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ **Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,** ¹⁰ **Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome** ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); **Cretans and Arabs** — we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ...

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

You remember the birthday of the church – don't you?

Please read Acts 2 out loud ... yep, all of it.

Go get your Bible (or Google: Acts 2)!

I'd say that Peter, a graduate of the three-year immersion course at the Jesus Seminary, did a pretty good job preaching that day!

Let's see what happened next ...

... and they all went home.



What did those 3000 do with the message they heard on that day from Peter? Throughout the rest of the New Testament, we see that whenever and wherever the great traveling evangelist, the Apostle Paul, went to synagogues all across the known world to take the message of “Christ and him crucified,” he found Christian churches already existing in them – every where he went! How did these churches beat him to the hinterlands?

Well, those **Parthians, Medes and Elamites**; residents of **Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt** and the parts of **Libya** near **Cyrene**; visitors from **Rome** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); **Cretans** and **Arabs** – who had been in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost – and had been in the crowd when Peter had preached ... all went home

... and told their neighbors about the good news (this ‘Gospel’) they had heard in Jerusalem!

... and the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of those who heard the good news

... and there were churches wherever the Word was heard.

(Have you shared the Good News you hear from the pulpit of your church each Sunday with your neighbors who weren’t in church with you to hear it?)

... “How a Gentile Becomes a Christian”

- The church resolved disputes with councils – of presbyters:
 - Dispute arose
 - Resolution sought from the elders of the church
 - Atmosphere of welcome
 - Elders met to consider the question
 - Question debated, scripture applied, decision made
 - Decision recorded, transmitted, and accepted

And when controversy arose in Antioch over the “How a Gentile Becomes a Christian” process -- the crucial issue for the church in Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles – and it became a stumbling block for his ministry, the Antioch congregation sent Paul and Barnabas to the elders of the larger church – who gathered in Jerusalem to resolve the dispute.

Lets look at the polity of what happened:

Please open your Bible (or another window) and read
Acts 15 - The Council at Jerusalem

¹ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp **dispute** and debate with them. [Although we would like to assume (though it is not recorded here) that Paul and Barnabas first went privately to these “Judaizers*” to remonstrate and correct them and, failing at that, brought their disagreement before the elders of the congregation of the church at Antioch where this dispute was not resolved either, Galatians 2 indicates that Paul may have faced these antagonists in public, ‘in the moment,’ as he did in the Galatians account with Peter. People and councils may err – it happens. (See Matthew 18:15-20** for the process that Jesus teaches.)]

So **Paul and Barnabas were appointed**, along with some other believers, to **go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question**. ... [this is the first 'overture' and its 'managers' sent to the first 'council' – to resolve the dispute.]

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, **they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders** [note the way these presbyters were treated], to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ **The apostles and elders met to consider this question** [note who heard the dispute – the assembled presbyters (apostles and elders)].

⁷ **After much discussion** [note that the issue was thoroughly aired and examined – and that the apostles apparently acted in parity with the elders and did not unduly assert their uniquely authoritative office in flow of the discussion], ...

¹² **The whole assembly became silent as they listened** [done 'decently and in order']
...

¹³ **When they finished**, ... **James** [the moderator of the assembly] spoke up. ¹⁵ "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: ... ¹⁹ "It is my judgment, therefore [the moderator summarized the consensus of the assembly],
²⁰ ... we should write to them, telling them ... (our decision) [a Stated Clerk role - recording the decision and publishing it to the church]."

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, **decided to choose some of their own men** [Judas and Silas] **and send them** [the first administrative commission of the assembly] ... and ²³ With them they sent the (the letter that recorded the specific decision) ...

[Here are the commission activities with the church who had the original dispute:]

³⁰ **So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch**, where they **gathered the church together and delivered the letter**. ³¹

The **people read it and were glad** for its **encouraging message** [the commission dealt in love with the church so that this was their response]. ³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, **said much to encourage and strengthen the believers**. ³³ After spending some time there, **they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them**.

What do we see here?

1. A congregation with an issue they cannot resolve within themselves asking for help in its resolution from its neighboring congregations' leaders.
2. The council of these leaders welcoming both the representatives of that congregation and the issue for resolution.
3. The council with certain leaders performing roles that our denomination uses today.
4. A well discussed and biblically based resolution, recorded and published to the whole church.
5. A commission of the larger church going to the congregation with the original issue and counseling them as to the wider body's resolution – *in so loving a manner* that they were received with joy.

As Wikipedia notes: The **Council of Jerusalem** (or **Apostolic Conference**) is a name applied by historians to an [Early Christian](#) council that was held in [Jerusalem](#) and dated to around the year 50. It is considered by [Catholics](#) and [Orthodox](#) to be a prototype and forerunner of the later [Ecumenical Councils](#). ... [Descriptions](#) of the council are found in [Acts of the Apostles](#) chapter 15 (in two different forms, the [Alexandrian and Western versions](#)) and also possibly in [Paul's letter to the Galatians](#) chapter 2. Some scholars dispute that Galatians 2 is about the *Council of Jerusalem* (notably because Galatians 2 describes a private meeting) while other scholars dispute the [historical reliability of the Acts of the Apostles](#). Paul was likely an eyewitness and a major person in attendance whereas the writer of [Luke-Acts](#) probably wrote second-hand about the meeting he described in Acts 15.

* See Galatians 2:14 (Young's Literal Translation) for this singular word-use reference in scripture and its translation as "Judaize." The context of this passage, Galatians 2, gives Paul's account of the broader background for the Acts passage examined here – another aspect of, and the personalities, dynamics, and breadth involved in the original (larger) dispute in Antioch and its underlying theological principle.

**Matthew 18:

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to

listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

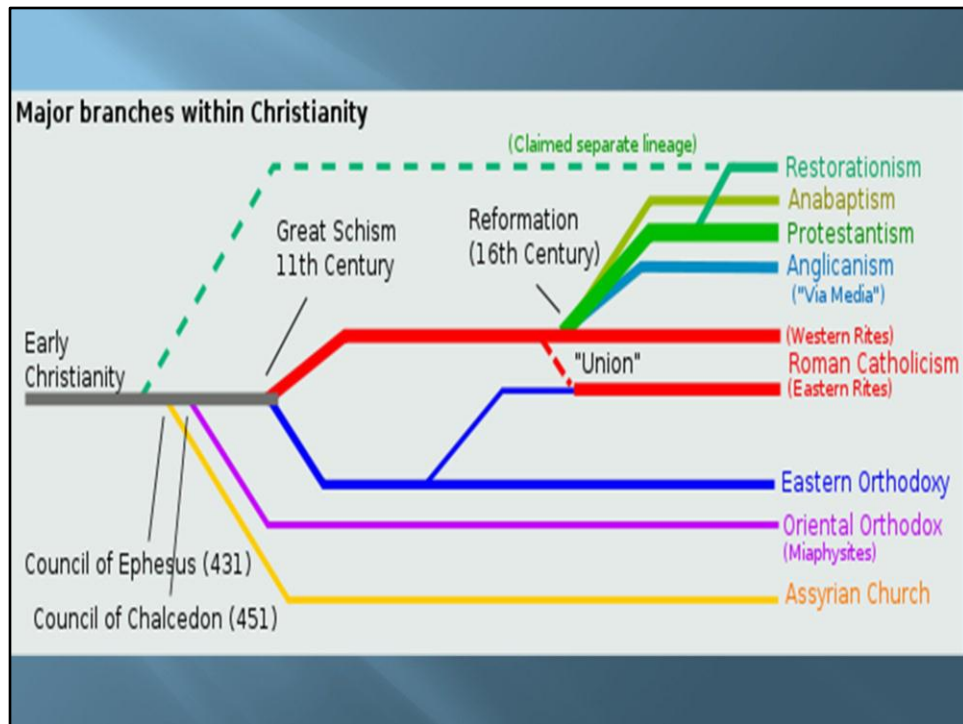
[*Witnesses*]

Deuteronomy 17:6

On the testimony of **two** or three **witnesses** a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Deuteronomy 19:15

One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of **two** or three **witnesses**.



Since then, the Church developed a bit over time, their understanding of the things they had been told in God's word leading them in several ways ...

(Trace from left to right to "Protestantism")

The **First Council of Ephesus** was the third [ecumenical council](#) of the early [Christian Church](#), held in 431 at the [Church of Mary](#) in [Ephesus](#), [Asia Minor](#). The council was called amid a dispute over the teachings of [Nestorius](#), [Patriarch of Constantinople](#) which emphasized the disunity between Christ's human and divine natures, and which had brought him into conflict with other church leaders, most notably [Cyril](#), [Patriarch of Alexandria](#). Nestorius himself had requested the council, hoping to prove his [orthodoxy](#), but in the end his teachings were condemned as [heresy](#).

Approximately 250 [bishops](#) were present at this council and the proceedings were conducted in a heated atmosphere of confrontation and recriminations. In the end, Nestorius was decisively outplayed by Cyril, removed from his [see](#), his teachings were officially anathematized – and the council's rejection of Nestorius precipitated a [Schism](#), in which a number of churches broke with the [Orthodox Church](#) and became what was later known as the [Church of the East](#).

Only 20 years later, the **Council of Chalcedon** - at [Chalcedon](#) (a city of [Bithynia](#) in [Asia Minor](#)), on the Asian side of the [Bosporus](#) - marked another key turning point in the

[Christological](#) debates that broke apart the church of the [Eastern Roman Empire](#) in the 5th century. It is the last council which many [Anglicans](#) and most [Protestants](#) consider [ecumenical](#).

The Council of Chalcedon repudiated [the idea that Jesus had only one nature](#), and stated that Christ has two natures in one person. The [Chalcedonian Creed](#) describes the "full humanity and full divinity" of [Jesus](#), the second person of the [Holy Trinity](#).

The **East–West Schism** of [1054](#), sometimes known as the **Great Schism**, formally divided the [State church of the Roman Empire](#) into [Eastern \(Greek\) and Western \(Latin\) branches](#), which later became known as the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) and the [Roman Catholic Church](#), respectively. Relations between East and West had long been embittered by political and [ecclesiastical differences](#) and [theological disputes](#). This one led to the crusades and though repudiated as recently as our lifetime by the Pope, has never been really healed.

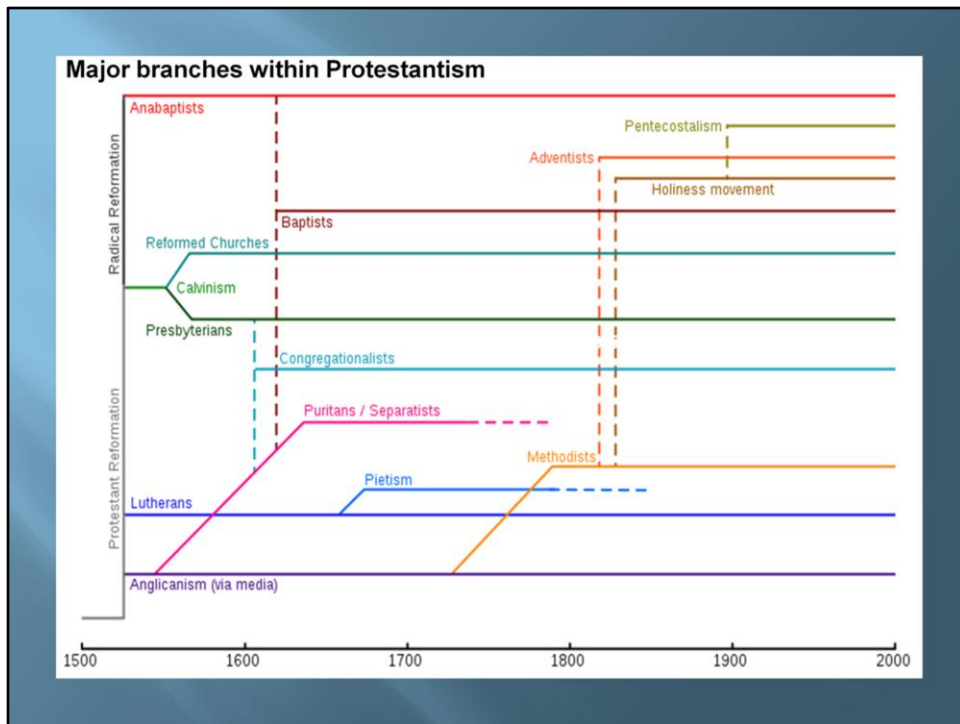
In 1965, the [Pope Paul VI](#) and the [Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople](#) nullified the anathemas of 1054, although this was essentially a goodwill gesture and did not constitute any sort of reunion between churches. Contacts between the two sides continue: Every year a delegation from each joins in the other's celebration of its patronal feast, [Saints Peter and Paul](#) (29 June) for Rome and [Saint Andrew](#) (30 November) for Constantinople, and there have been a number of visits by the head of each to the other.

The **Protestant Reformation**, also known as the **Protestant Revolt**, was led by [Martin Luther](#), [John Calvin](#) and other early Protestants in the early 1500s. The efforts of the self-described "reformers" who objected to ("protested") the doctrines, rituals and ecclesiastical structure of the [Catholic Church](#), led to the creation of new national [Protestant](#) churches.

The Catholics responded with a [Counter-Reformation](#), led by the [Jesuit order](#), which reclaimed large parts of Europe, such as [Poland](#).

In general, [northern Europe](#), with the exception of [Ireland](#) and pockets of [Britain](#), turned Protestant, and [southern Europe](#) remained Catholic, while fierce battles that turned into warfare took place in [central Europe](#).

The largest of the new denominations were the [Anglicans](#) (based in [England](#)), the [Lutherans](#) (based in [Germany](#) and [Scandinavia](#)), and the [Reformed churches](#) (based in Germany, [Switzerland](#), the [Netherlands](#) and [Scotland](#)). There were many smaller bodies as well.



Looking at closer at Protestantism, beginning on the left side ...

(Trace to Presbyterianism.)

The **Reformed churches** are a group of [Protestant denominations](#) characterized by [Calvinist](#) doctrines. They are descended from the [Swiss Reformation](#) inaugurated by [Huldrych Zwingli](#) but developed more coherently by [Martin Bucer](#), [Heinrich Bullinger](#) and especially [John Calvin](#). In the sixteenth century the movement spread to most of Europe, aligning with national governments in most cases, though several of these national or specific language based churches later expanded to worldwide denominations. There are now many different reformed churches: a 1999 survey found 746 Reformed denominations worldwide.

Presbyterianism refers to a number of [Christian](#) churches adhering to the [Calvinist](#) theological tradition within [Protestantism](#), which are organized according to a characteristic [Presbyterian polity](#). Presbyterian theology typically emphasizes the [sovereignty](#) of [God](#), the authority of the Scriptures, and the necessity of [grace](#) through faith in [Christ](#).

Presbyterianism originated primarily in [Scotland](#) and was confirmed as the means of Church Government in Scotland by the [Acts of Union](#) in 1707. Most Presbyterians found in England can trace a [Scottish](#) connection and the denomination was taken to

North America by Scots and Scots-Irish immigrants. The Presbyterian denominations in Scotland hold to the theology of Calvin and his immediate successors, although there is a range of theological views within contemporary Presbyterianism.

Modern Presbyterianism traces its institutional roots back to the [Scottish Reformation](#). Local congregations are governed by [Sessions](#) made up of representatives of the congregation, a conciliar approach which is found at other levels of decision-making ([Presbytery](#), [Synod](#) and [General Assembly](#)).

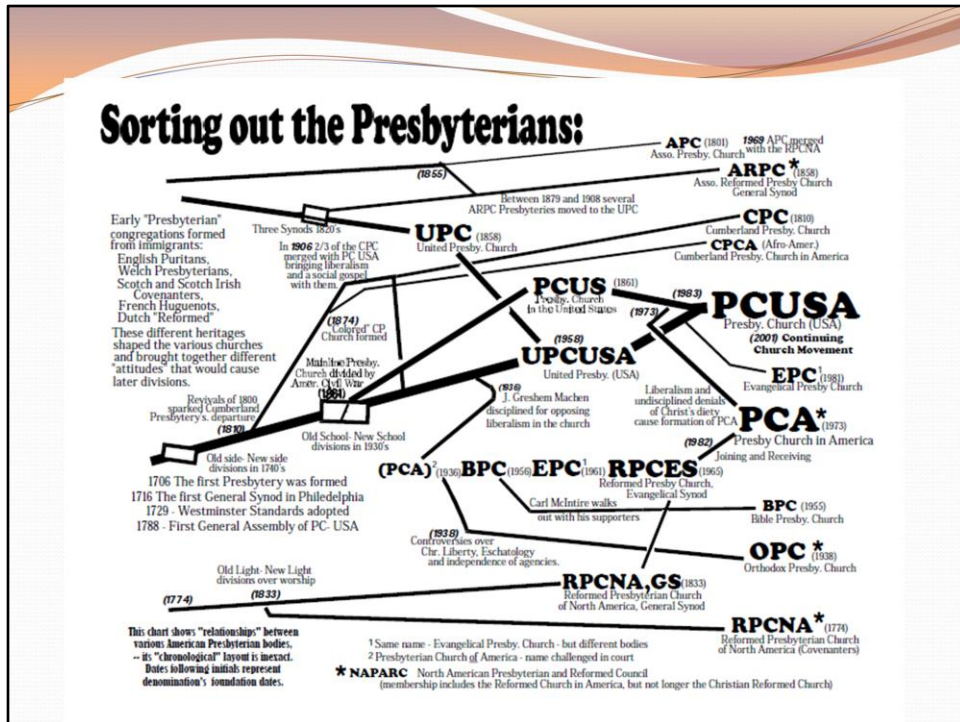
Theoretically, there are no [bishops](#) in Presbyterianism; however, some groups in Eastern Europe, and in ecumenical groups, do have bishops. The office of [elder](#) is another distinctive mark of Presbyterianism: these are specially ordained non-clergy who take part in local pastoral care and decision-making at all levels. The office of deacon is geared toward the care of members, their families, and the surrounding community. In some congregations active elders and deacons serve a three-year term and then rotate off for at least a year. The offices of pastor, elder, and deacon all commence with ordination; once a person is ordained, he holds that title for the rest of his life. An individual may serve as both an elder and a deacon.

The roots of Presbyterianism lie in the European [Reformation](#) of the 16th century, with the example of [John Calvin](#)'s Geneva being particularly influential. Most [Reformed churches](#) who trace their history back to Scotland are either Presbyterian or [Congregationalist](#) in government.

As we will note later, in the twentieth century, some Presbyterians played an important role in the [Ecumenical Movement](#), including the [World Council of Churches](#). Many Presbyterian denominations have found ways of working together with other [Reformed](#) denominations and Christians of other traditions, especially in the [World Communion of Reformed Churches](#). Some Presbyterian churches have entered into unions with other churches, such as [Congregationalists](#), [Lutherans](#), [Anglicans](#), and [Methodists](#).

... and everything was fine since then ... right?

Well ... Lets look a little more closely at the thin, apparently unified green line of Presbyterians – especially in America ... from the 1600s to today.

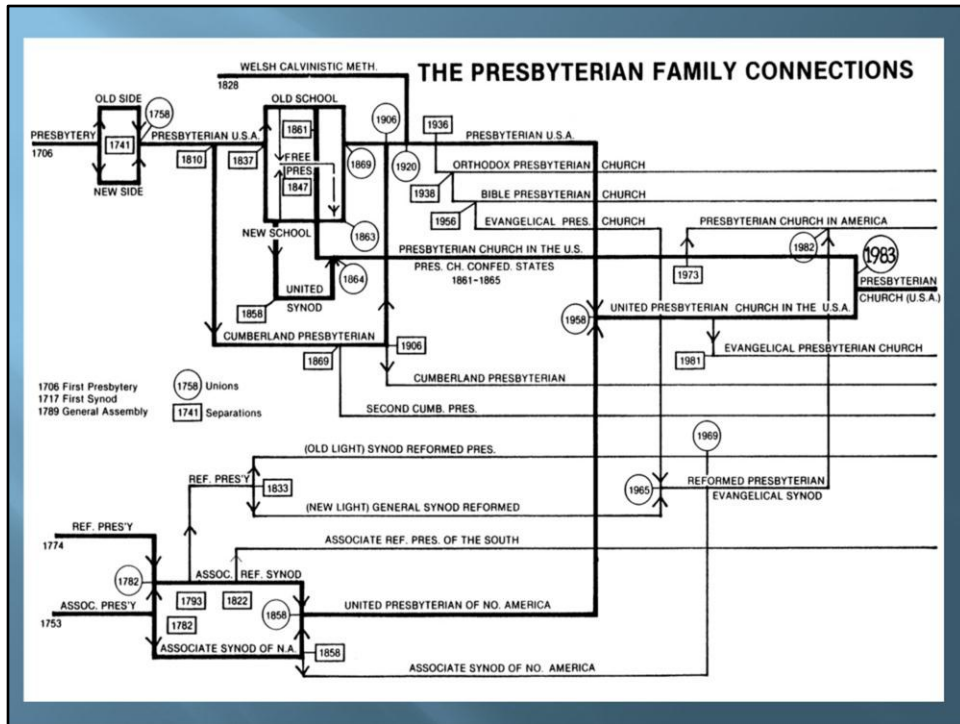


Well! All may not be so unified after all on that thin green Presbyterian line after all!

Got all of these relationships?

This will be on the test.

Maybe you will prefer ...



This is the PCUSA's family portrait of American Presbyterianism – or the “**worms chart**” – in my terms.

- Most people look at the other chart, wrinkle their brow, and put their chin on their fist, saying: “Mmmmm.”
- When I show them this one, they brighten right up, wag their finger, say: “A-ha!” -- so we will stick with this one.

Even before Presbyterianism spread abroad from Scotland, there were divisions in the larger Presbyterian family. In Europe, some later rejoined only to separate again. In what a few may interpret as rueful self-reproach, some Presbyterians refer to these divided churches as the “Split Ps.”

So, we start at the left in 1706, 1774, and 1753 with at least three separate Presbyterian heritage lines coming to America – and we end at the right, early in the second millennium, with at least nine lines! ... and these are just the ones that the PCUSA ‘fesses up to! (The power of the pen.)

Some of this might be explained by our heritage:

I remember hearing at a the installation of our new pastor at Macalester Presbyterian Church – on the edge of the campus of Macalester college in St Paul, Minnesota the moderator of presbytery observe in these surroundings

that wherever a Scot landed in America, he started a Presbyterian Church *and a Presbyterian College*.

And when the second Scot arrived, he started another – of each!

Maybe it is some Scottish thing that makes us get along together so well ... kilts – or bagpipes, or exuberant caber-tossing, perhaps ... ah, we Scottish!

Jumping right into the organizational development of American Presbyterianism, see here pretty plainly what we seem to do best – split and join – re-split and re-join!

Lets bring us into relatively modern American Presbyterian History –

In the United States, because of past or current doctrinal differences, Presbyterian churches often overlap, with congregations of many different Presbyterian groups in any one place. The largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States is the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) or PC(USA). Other Presbyterian bodies in the United States include the [Presbyterian Church in America](#), the [Orthodox Presbyterian Church](#), the [Evangelical Presbyterian Church](#), the [Reformed Presbyterian Church](#), the [Bible Presbyterian Church](#), the [Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church](#) (ARP Synod), the [Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#), the [Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America](#), the [Westminster Presbyterian Church in the United States](#) (WPCUS), and the [Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States](#) (RPCUS).

The territory within about a 50-mile (80 km) radius of Charlotte, North Carolina, is historically the greatest concentration of Presbyterianism in the Southern United States, while an almost identical geographic area around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, contains probably the largest number of Presbyterians in the entire nation.

Canada

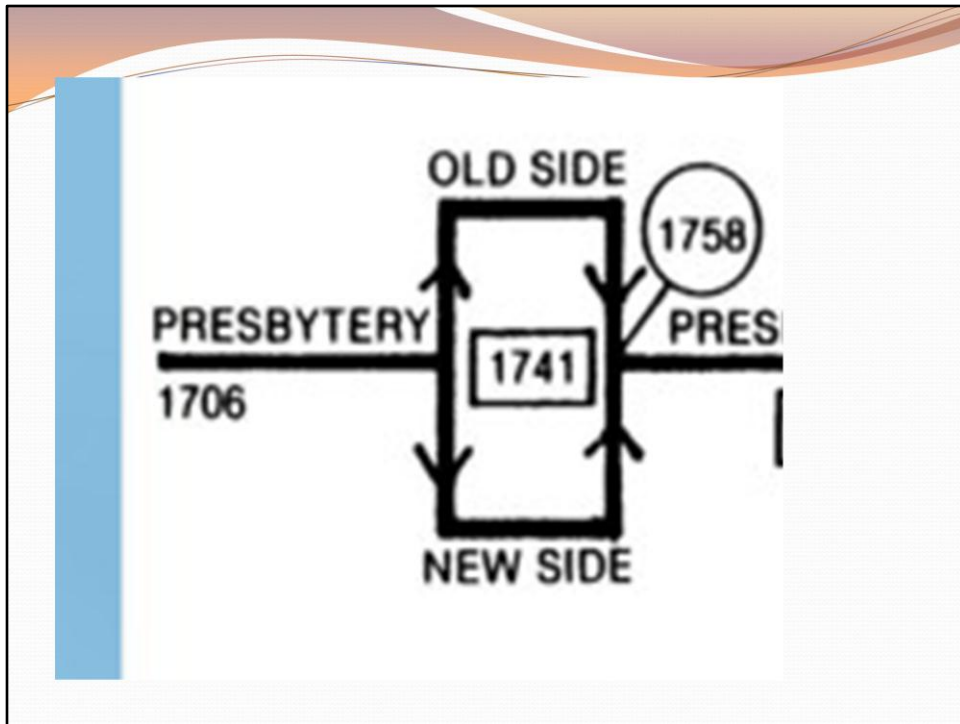
In Canada, the largest Presbyterian denomination – and indeed the largest Protestant denomination – was the [Presbyterian Church in Canada](#), formed in 1875 with the merger of four regional groups. In 1925, the [United Church of Canada](#) was formed with the [Methodist Church](#), Canada, and the [Congregational Union of Canada](#). A sizable minority of Canadian Presbyterians, primarily in southern Ontario but also throughout the entire nation, withdrew, and reconstituted themselves as a non-concurring continuing Presbyterian body. They regained use of the original name in 1939.

Latin America

Presbyterianism arrived in Latin America in the 19th century. The biggest Presbyterian

church is the [National Presbyterian Church of Mexico](#) ("Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México"), which has around 2,500,000 members and associates, but there are other small denominations. In Brazil, the [Presbyterian Church of Brazil](#) (*Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil*) totals approximately 788,553 members; other Presbyterian churches (Independents, United, Conservatives, Renovated - Charismatic, Free, Fundamentalist, Evangelical) in this nation have around 350,000 members. There are probably more than four million members of Presbyterian churches in all of Latin America. Presbyterian churches are also present in Peru, Bolivia, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Argentina and others, but with few members. Some Latin Americans in North America are active in the [Presbyterian Cursillo Movement](#) (some of you may know what that means – only a month or so ago we had an organizing meeting of this movement in our church).

We will spend some time this chart – but I will focus us on the parts we are discussing – American Presbyterianism in the USA ... here we go!



The **Old Side-New Side Controversy** occurred within the [Presbyterian Church](#) in [Colonial America](#) and was part of the wider theological controversy surrounding the [First Great Awakening](#). The Old and New Side Presbyterians existed as separate churches from 1741 until 1758. The name of Old Side-New Side is usually meant as specifically referring to the Presbyterian Church. When one is referring to the debate as a whole, [Old and New Light](#) is usually used.

Beginnings of the Controversy, 1737-1741

It is unclear when the trouble and differences arose in the Synod of Philadelphia. What is agreed is that by 1737 trouble was undeniable. That year the Synod passed several acts of importance.

- The first was one forbidding the practice of itinerant preaching by requiring permission from the governing presbytery to agree to the traveling minister.
- The second was the requiring of a college diploma prior to a candidate being taken on trials for the ministry. For those unable to go to college two committees were set up who would examine the candidate and certify them as ready for trials or not. These first two acts seem aimed at those who supported the First Great Awakening. [Gilbert Tennent](#) specifically thought the act about college diplomas was directed at his father, [William Tennent](#)'s [Log College](#) from which the majority of early Awakening

- supporters graduated.
- The third act of that year created a Presbytery of [New Brunswick](#). This presbytery was controlled by pro-Awakening men, who would be called the New Side. It was the first presbytery controlled by the New Side. Those who opposed the Awakening would come to be called the Old Side.

In 1739, the New Brunswick Presbytery presented a defense of their licensing John Rowland, entitled An Apology of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, against the Education act of 1737, as Rowland had no diploma as his only place of training was the [Log College](#). The Synod considered the Apology, but rejected it and upheld the 1737 act. To this a protest was entered by [Gilbert Tennent](#) and other New Side adherents. This protest was renewed the next year and joined by more New Side ministers. This time the Synod agreed to repeal the act. No permanent solution was reached. During the synod, the New Side ministers preached in a pulpit erected for the coming of [George Whitefield](#). Whitefield had befriended the New Side ministers, especially Gilbert Tennent, and they were preparing for his arrival by sermons. The Old Side ministers were not allowed to preach in this pulpit. Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Blair also presented papers to the Synod where they accused ministers within the church as being unconverted, but no names were given despite the request of Synod.

The year of formal breach occurred in 1741 when after the Presbytery of Donegal failed to discipline one of its New Side members, [Alexander Craighead](#), for violating the Itinerate minister act of 1737. He had preached in the pulpit of [Francis Alison](#) without permission. Alison tried to get a trial against Craighead at Synod, but nothing would come of it as the New Side ministers would not allow it. Craighead read papers in his defense and the New Side presented charges against John Thomson a leading minister of the Old Side. Finally on June 1, Robert Cross presented a Protest against the actions of the New Side. The Protest was signed by the leading Old Side ministers including John Thomson and Francis Alison. The New Side ministers and elders requested a vote to see who was in the majority. The Old Side ministers were in the majority, and the New Side ministers withdrew and formed the Conjunct Presbytery. The Old Side ministers continued as the Synod of Philadelphia. The entire Presbytery of New York was absent from the Synod of 1741 probably in hopes of avoiding taking sides.

Years of Schism, 1742-58

For the next several years the Conjunct Presbytery and the Synod of Philadelphia battled in print and over reuniting with the Presbytery of New York standing in the middle. The Presbytery of New York generally favored the revival, but had doubts about some of the extreme and disorderly actions. Finally, in 1746, the Presbytery of New York left the Synod of Philadelphia and joined the New Side. The Conjunct

Presbytery then became the Synod of New York while the Old Side ministers continued as the Synod of Philadelphia^[1].

1758 Reunification and Legacy of the Controversy

As the fervor that was the Great Awakening died down, the two synods spoke about union. These talks were in full swing by 1751, but would not come to final fruition until 1758. On May 29, 1758 at three p.m. the two synods unanimously decided to unite forming the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.

The factions of the Old Side and New Side did not die down. The Synod of New York had 72 ministers in 1758 when it merged with the Synod of Philadelphia, which had only a little over twenty. Thus, the New Side doctrine was imposed upon the Presbyteries and became the rule of the Synod. By 1762 disagreement over the plan of union and examination of candidates for the ministry had erupted at synod. The Old Side did not inquire into the candidate's experience to determine his acquaintance with religion, and the New Side minister had done so. The synod decided to leave it up to each presbytery on whether or not to question candidates in such a manner. That year they also created a Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, which was clearly done on a theological split, not a geographical one. In 1765 the Old Side controlled Presbytery of Donegal was split into multiple presbyteries. On account of this perceived violation of their rights and the Plan of Union, the Old Side members of the Presbytery of Donegal withdrew from Synod and Revs. John Ewing and Alexander McDowell, both Old Side ministers, protested the decision of synod to split Donegal. In the end, the outbreak of the Revolutionary War took center stage and by the end of the war the Synod of New York and Philadelphia dissolved and in 1788 the first General Assembly was formed^[2].

Differences

There are three main areas of disagreement between the New Side and the Old Side. These are the three areas enumerated in the seven points of the Protestation of 1741 made by the Old Side ministers.

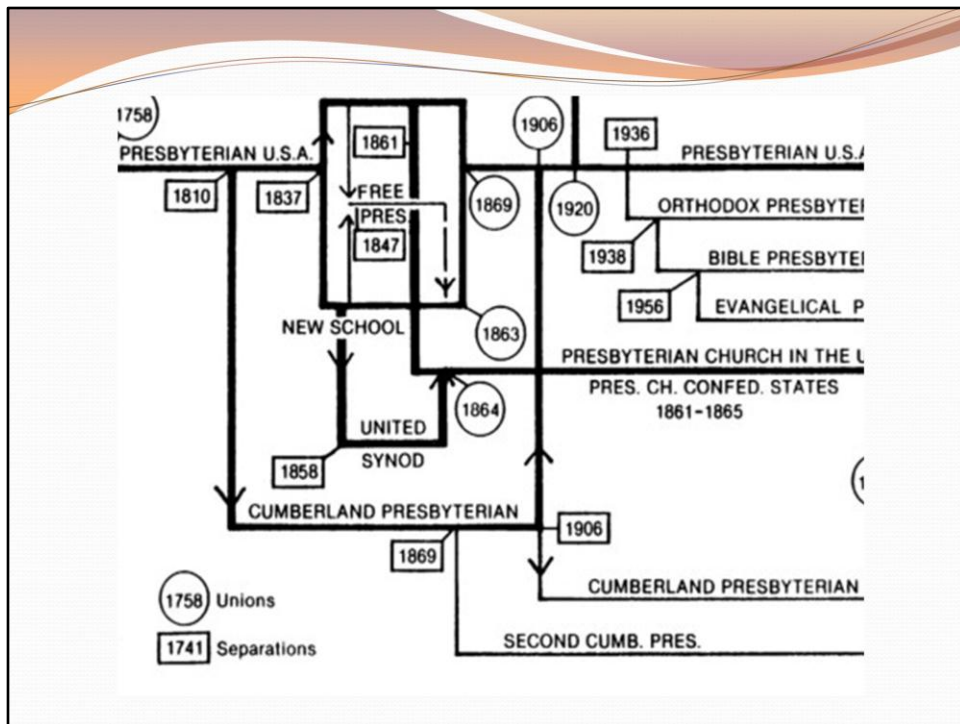
1. **Philosophy of ecclesiastical government.** Points one and two of the Protest deal with government. The Old Side believed the Synod was a higher court than the Presbyteries, and had legislative powers. The New Side believed the Synod was a higher court, but had only advisory powers - thus, presbyteries were not bound to obey a Synodical rule. This led directly to the New Side Presbytery of New Brunswick ordaining and licensing men without conforming to the acts of Synod passed regarding licensure and ordination.
2. **Itinerant Ministry.** Point three of the Protest regards the itinerant ministry conducted by many New Side ministers. New Side ministers regularly preached in churches that were under the oversight of Old Side ministers. The Old Side found this disorderly, the New Side was offended that they were not

welcome in the pulpits of fellow ministers of their own denomination. Traveling around and preaching in pulpits that were not your own was a common practice during the First Great Awakening both inside and outside of the Presbyterian Church.

3. The Doctrine of Convictions. Points four through seven all deal with consequences of having a different understanding of the Doctrine of Convictions. The Old Side ministers accused the New Side ministers of rashly condemning other Presbyterian ministers as unconverted (point four), of teaching that regularly ordained ministers could do no spiritual good if they were unconverted (point five), of preaching the ‘terrors of the law’ (point six), and of requiring a conversion narrative and being able to judge the gracious state of an individual by that narrative (point seven). The New Side condemned the Old Side for not requiring narratives or preaching the [terrors of the law](#)^[3]. Gilbert Tennent at least believed that some ministers were unconverted and that people should not sit under the ministry of an unconverted minister. This comes from his famous sermon, “Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry” [\[4\]](#).

Views Today

There are many different view points on the Old Side – New Side Conflict today. Historian Joseph Tracy held that the Old Side was saved from drifting into “the dead sea of Arminian inefficiency, and the bottomless gulf of Unitarianism” by reuniting with the New Side in 1758^[5]. Others think that there were no doctrinal divisions between the two parties, just ones of methodology^[6] -- one thing we can see, though – not all revival outcomes are good!



The **Cumberland Presbyterian Church** is a [Presbyterian Christian denomination](#) spawned by the [Second Great Awakening](#).^[1] In 2007, it had an active membership of less than 50,000^[2] and about 800 congregations,^[2] the majority of which are concentrated in the [United States](#). The word *Cumberland* comes from the [Cumberland River](#) valley where the church was founded.

The divisions which led to the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church can be traced back to the [First Great Awakening](#). At that time, [Presbyterians](#) in North America split between the *Old Side* (mainly congregations of [Scottish](#) and [Scots-Irish](#) extraction) who favored a doctrinally-oriented church with a highly-educated ministry and a *New Side* (mainly of [English](#) extraction) who put greater emphasis on the revivalistic techniques championed by the Great Awakening. The formal split between Old Side and New Side only lasted from 1741 to 1758, but the two orientations remained present in the reunified church and would come to the fore again during the [Second Great Awakening](#).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Presbyterians on the frontier suffered from a shortage of educated clergy willing to move to the frontier beyond the [Appalachian Mountains](#). At the same time, [Methodists](#) and [Baptists](#) were sending preachers with little or no formal training into frontier regions and were very successful in organizing Methodist and Baptist congregations. Drawing on New Side precedents, [Cumberland Presbytery](#) in [Kentucky](#) began ordaining men without the

educational background required by the [Kentucky Synod](#). This was bad enough for supporters of the Old Side, but what was even worse was that the presbytery allowed ministers to offer a qualified assent to the [Westminster Confession](#), only requiring them to swear assent to the Confession "so far as they deemed it agreeable to the Word of God." Old Siders in the Kentucky Synod (which had oversight over Cumberland Presbytery) sought to discipline the presbytery. Presbytery and synod were involved in a protracted dispute which touched upon the nature of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Ultimately, the synod decided to dissolve [Cumberland Presbytery](#) and expel a number of its ministers.

The Cumberland Presbyterian denomination was made up of the expelled members of the [Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#) (PCUSA) and others in the area when the Kentucky Synod dissolved the original Cumberland Presbytery.^[1] There is historical evidence in the writings of several of the founders that indicate they did not intend the split to be permanent and certainly did not anticipate a long-standing separate denomination.

On February 4, 1810, near what later became [Burns, Tennessee](#) in the log cabin home of the Rev. [Samuel McAdow](#), he, the Rev. [Finis Ewing](#) and the Rev. [Samuel King](#) reorganized Cumberland Presbytery. After rapid growth, Cumberland Presbytery became Cumberland Synod in 1813 and the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination in 1829 when the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was established.

A replica of the Rev. Samuel McAdow's cabin now stands where the three founded the church, and a sandstone chapel commemorating the event has been erected nearby. These two buildings are two of the main attractions in the surrounding [Montgomery Bell State Park](#). An outgrowth of the Great Revival of 1800, also called the Second Great Awakening, the new denomination arose to minister to the spiritual needs of a pioneer people who turned from the doctrine of [predestination](#) as they interpreted it to embrace the so-called "Whosoever Will" gospel of the new church. The [Red River Meeting House](#) in [Logan County, Kentucky](#), marks the location of the revival meeting thought by some to have given rise to the first organized Cumberland Presbyterian congregation.

Subsequent history

In 1826, Cumberland Presbyterians established [Cumberland College](#) in [Princeton, Kentucky](#), in order to better train their candidates for the ministry. Although very much a frontier institution, under the presidency of [Franceway Ranna Cossitt](#), Cumberland College was one of the first colleges in the United States to accept women as students. Ann Harpending and Melinda Barnett, for example, enrolled in the very first class.^[1]

The [Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America](#), a primarily African-American denomination, split from the primarily white Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1874. Relations between the two groups have for the most part been very cordial, and many of the CPCA ministers have trained at [Memphis Theological Seminary](#). A reunion attempt on the part of both denominations failed to win approval in the late 1980s. The African American church wanted equal representation on all boards and agencies, feeling that otherwise they would be swallowed up by the larger white church. The joint committee drafting the plan of union agreed and made such a stipulation in its reporting to the General Assembly. However, many in the white, rural, southern-based church were not willing to cede that much power and balked at the plan. No other plans for union have been attempted. However, the two denominations share a confession of faith and cooperate in many common ministries.

The [Upper Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#) is a small denomination which broke off from the Cumberland Presbyterian church over issues of membership in the [National Council of Churches](#) and the use of the [Revised Standard Version](#) of the [Bible](#).

In 1889, Cumberland Presbyterians were the first body in the Presbyterian and [Reformed](#) tradition to ordain a woman as a minister, [Louisa Mariah Layman Woosley](#).^[1] It is interesting to note that a relatively conservative body, Nolin Presbytery, ordained Woosley while a relatively liberal body, [Kentucky Synod](#), opposed her ordination and instructed the presbytery to remove her from the ministerial roll.^[1]

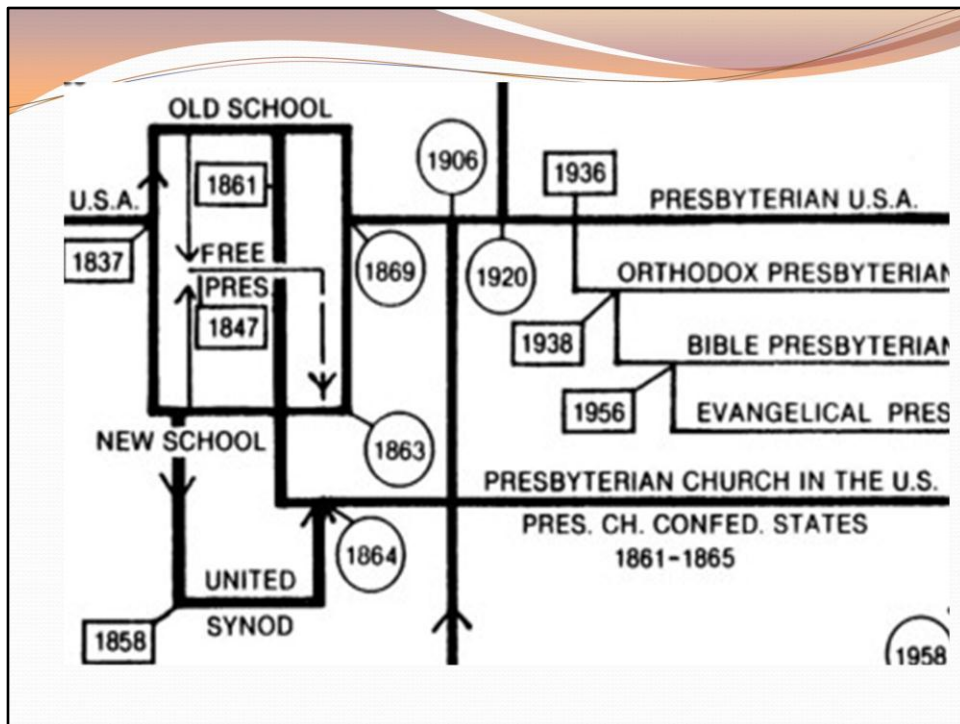
By 1900, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was the third largest Presbyterian or Reformed body in the United States and was rapidly growing.^[1] After making revisions to the Westminster Confession in 1903, the PCUSA (the so-called "Northern" denomination) proposed reunification with the CPC. The General Assembly voted by a significant majority for the union in the 1906 meeting.^[1] As a result, a large number of Cumberland congregations re-entered the PCUSA in 1906 and those who remained in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church felt somewhat antagonistic towards the PCUSA for generations afterward. Over the years, the bitterness subsided but has never entirely been forgotten. However, the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#), the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America held concurrent 2006 general assemblies in [Birmingham, Alabama](#) in celebration of 300 years of Presbyterianism in North America. The confessional differences between the denominations that resulted in the CPC's split have largely disappeared. However, new differences have arisen such as the stances on homosexuality and views toward the scriptures. The CPC, for the most part, holds to more conservative beliefs than the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with an orientation toward [Arminianism](#) as opposed to the strict [Calvinism](#) of other conservative

Presbyterian churches in the U.S.

Beliefs and practices

The denomination as a whole has a socially progressive tradition. Cumberland Presbyterians were among the first denominations to admit women to their educational institutions and to accept them in leadership roles. They were the first to include women as ordained clergy.^[1] Cumberland Presbyterians were also early to ordain African-Americans to the ministry.^[1] The 1984 revision of the Cumberland Presbyterian Confession of Faith, reflecting the denomination's long-standing traditions, was one of the first inclusive confessional documents in the Reformed tradition. This Confession was revised by a broad composite of theologians of both Cumberland Presbyterian Churches.

However, for the most part, the CPC's constituency and theology resembles that of the [United Methodist Church](#), appealing mainly to long-established families with revivalistic religious tastes and generally conservative cultural dispositions, derived chiefly from the agricultural orientation of most of its historic territory, the [Upper South](#). Although explicit [fundamentalism](#) and [liberalism](#) are rare in the CPC, neither are entirely absent, and recent trends in the denomination seem to be moving it further to the right. This conservative thrust has probably been generated in response to the strong competition the CPC faces in most of its locales for a lower-to-middle-class constituency from groups like the [Southern Baptist Convention](#), charismatic or [Pentecostal](#) faiths, and newer non-denominational fellowships. As the denomination has become more conservative, some of its more liberal ministers and members have transferred membership to the Presbyterian Church (USA), thereby intensifying already-present theological and social tendencies in the remaining CPC faithful toward evangelicalism.



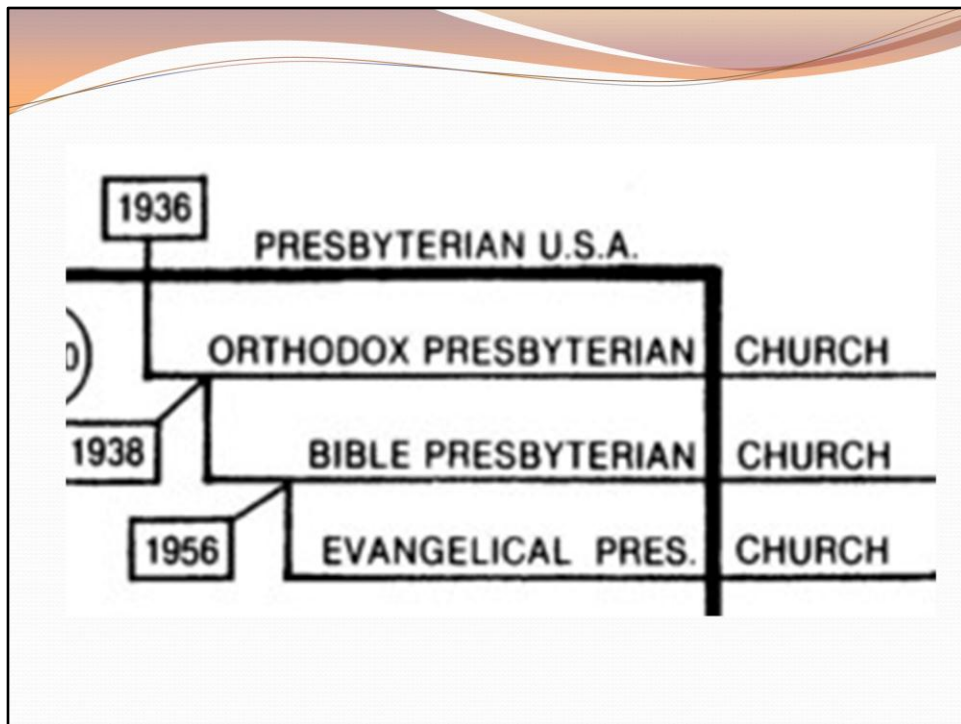
The **Old School-New School Controversy** was a [schism](#) of the [Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#) which began in 1837. Later, both the Old School and New School branches further split over the issue of slavery – and more significantly, over the issue of political loyalty to the United States of America (“the North”) - into southern and northern churches. After three decades of separate operation, the two sides of the controversy merged, in 1865 in the south and in 1870 in the north, to form united Presbyterian churches, although these were still separated into two (as opposed to four) branches based upon the civil war divisions.

As a result of the great experiment in church-expansion practicality -- the [Plan of Union of 1801](#) with the General Association of Connecticut, Presbyterian missionaries began to work with Congregationalist missionaries in western New York and the [Northwest Territory](#) to advance Christian evangelism. This resulted in new churches being formed with either Congregational or Presbyterian forms of government, or a mixture of the two, supported by older established churches with a different form of government, and often clergy in controversy with their own congregations that disagreed with their [ecclesiology](#). It also resulted in a difference in doctrinal commitment and views among churches in close fellowship, leading to suspicion and controversy.

The controversy reached a climax at a meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia in 1837 in which representatives of several

church synods (those of the Western Reserve, Utica, Geneva, and Genesee) were refused recognition as lawfully part of the meeting. These and others who sympathized with them departed and formed their own General Assembly meeting in another church building nearby, setting the stage for a secular-civil court dispute (the first of two crucial disputes settled in the US court system and not in the ecclesiastical court system of the church) about which of the two General Assemblies constituted the true continuing Presbyterian church. The [Supreme Court of Pennsylvania](#) decided that the Old School Assembly was the true representative of the Presbyterian church and their decisions would govern.^[1]

While the debate raged for decades, the national crisis of civil war overshadowed the controversy and both sides moderated their position to some degree. By the time of reunion (in 1863), most Presbyterians agreed that union within the church was more important than the issues which caused division, and the minority was mostly silent. Some historians believe, however, that the reunion left seeds of the controversy which later erupted over [Charles Augustus Briggs](#) and, ultimately, the [Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy](#) of the twentieth century.



The **Orthodox Presbyterian Church** (OPC) is a [conservative Presbyterian](#) denomination located primarily in the [United States](#). It was founded by conservative members of the [Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#) (PCUSA) who strongly objected to the pervasive Modernist theology during the 1930s (see [Fundamentalist–Modernist Controversy](#)). Led by [J. Gresham Machen](#), who had helped found [Westminster Theological Seminary](#), the church attempted to preserve historic [Calvinism](#) within a Presbyterian structure. The name signifies its professed adherence to [orthodox](#) Calvinist Protestant Christian teachings; it is not related to any branch of [Eastern Christianity](#).

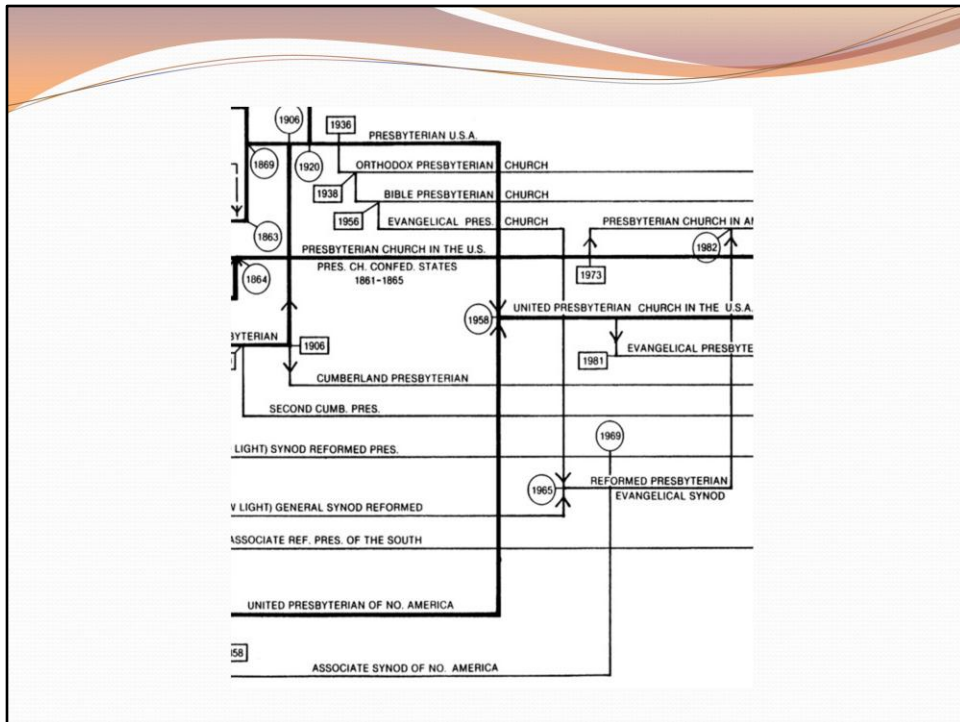
Standing in the tradition of men like [Charles Hodge](#), [Geerhardus Vos](#), and [B. B. Warfield](#), Machen was one of the chief conservative professors at [Princeton Theological Seminary](#), which until the early twentieth century was a bastion of orthodox Presbyterian theology. In 1929, the [seminary](#) board reorganized along more theologically liberal lines, and appointed professors who were significantly more friendly to [modernism](#) and some forms of [liberalism](#).

Machen and a group of other conservatives objected to these changes that he believed compromised the distinctives of the Reformed tradition, if not the basic tenets of Christianity itself, he led a conservative revolt against modernist theology at Princeton. When the northern Presbyterian church (PCUSA) rejected his arguments during the mid-1920s and decided to reorganize Princeton Seminary to create a

moderate school, Machen took the lead in founding Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia (1929) where he taught New Testament until his death.

His continued opposition during the 1930s to liberalism in his denomination's foreign missions agencies led to the creation of a new organization, The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (1933). This Board presented a funding alternative – and was in opposition to the denominational Board, who, from 1914 to 1933, sponsored among others, Pearl S. Buck (author of the Pulitzer- Prize winning book, “The Good Earth”) as a Presbyterian missionary. Though her views denying the more orthodox doctrines of Christology later became highly controversial in the [Fundamentalist–Modernist Controversy](#) and led to her resignation, they sparked the heresy trial of Machen and other founders of the Independent Board. Machen and his allies were deposed from the ministry of the old Church. Their trial, conviction, and suspension from the ministry of Independent Board members, including Machen, in 1935 and 1936 provided the rationale for the formation in 1936 of the OPC. On June 11, 1936, Machen and a group of conservative ministers, elders, and laymen met in [Philadelphia](#) to form the **Presbyterian Church of America** (not to be confused with the [Presbyterian Church in America](#) which was organized some forty years later). The PCUSA filed suit against the fledgling denomination for their choice of name, and in 1939, the denomination adopted a new name as the **Orthodox Presbyterian Church**.

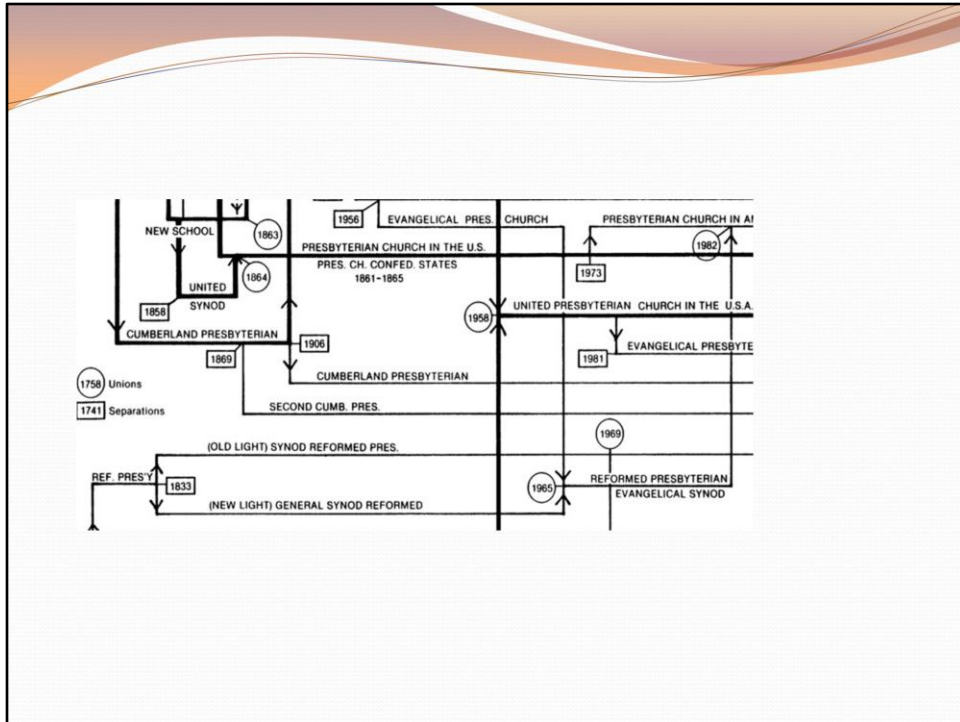
At the time leading up to the founding of the OPC, Machen and his allies in the PCUSA were considered to be prominent leaders of [Christian fundamentalism](#). Machen and the majority of the OPC, however, were committed to the historic [Reformed](#) tradition with plenary statements of faith, rather than to the fundamentalist movement, which, in the estimation of many in the Reformed tradition, was inadequate in its doctrinal formulations. By 1937, a faction of the OPC more committed to a bare Fundamentalism, distinguished by such things as [total abstinence](#) from alcohol, [premillennialist](#) eschatology, opposition to the [ecumenical movement](#), and political activism against the [Communist Party](#), broke away under the leadership of [Carl McIntire](#) to form the [Bible Presbyterian Church](#).



In the midst of splits – came re-joins.

The **United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America** was the largest branch of [Presbyterianism](#) in the [United States](#) from May 28, 1958 to 1983. It was formed by the union of the [Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#) (PCUSA), often referred to, inaccurately, mostly by [Southerners](#), as the "Northern" Presbyterian Church, with the [United Presbyterian Church of North America](#) (UPCNA), a smaller church of [Covenanter-Seceder](#) tradition at a conference in [downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#) in May 1958. Vigorous [ecumenical](#) activity on the part of PCUSA leaders led to this merger, something of a reunion of two long-separated branches of the larger Presbyterian family deriving from the [British Isles](#).

Note however, it lost congregations to the **Evangelical Presbyterian Church** in 1981 -- a result of [prayer](#) meetings in 1980 and 1981 by pastors and elders increasingly alienated by [liberalism](#) in the "northern" branch of Presbyterianism (the [United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.](#)). An important catalyst of their separation was the decision of a [Maryland](#) presbytery to permit a minister of the [United Church of Christ](#) who did not forthrightly affirm the divinity of Jesus to become pastor of one of its churches. Another important catalyst was another presbytery refusing to ordain a graduate of seminary, who, in good conscience, declared that he would refuse to participate in the ordination of a woman, although he affirmed that he would willingly serve in a pastorate with ordained women on the staff.^[1]



The plot thickens! Lets talk about the long-awaited, northern-southern reunion that is the subject of our history today.

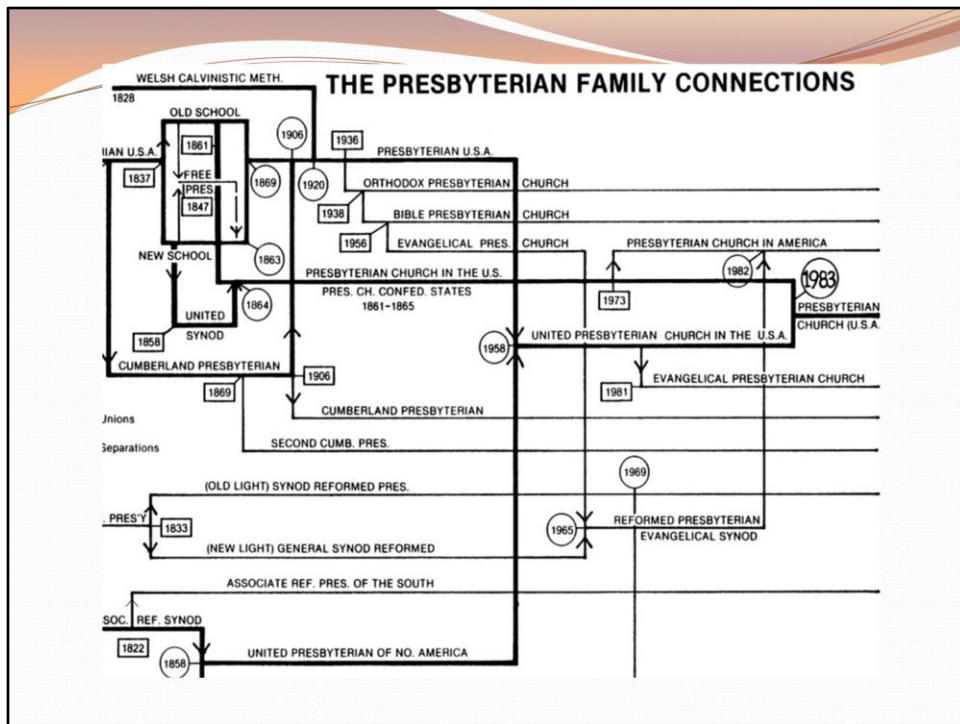
We have already seen the lead-up to it in the rejoin in the late 1950s. Talks had actually been going on since the end of the civil War – but many splits and joins had intervened the status of churches at that war's end – eh? Well, here is another -- out of left field!

The “first north-south reunion” occurred in 1982 (where were you?). Were we part of it? Here is the run-up:

- The PCUS split over liberal-conservative issues in 1973, the conservatives leaving to form the **Presbyterian Church in America**.
- For the northern strand history in this reunion; though, we jump back to the old **Reformed Presbytery** – split in 1833 by a new light-old light controversy – whose new light (conservative) side had joined with the conservative **Evangelical Synod** (descended out of the Machen trial heritage of the northern strand church) to form the **Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod** in 1965.
- In 1982, the RPCES, a northern strand, conservative church was joined and

received by the PCA, a the southern strand, conservative church – in the first north-south denominational reunion.

Note that the “southern strand church,” the Presbyterian Church in the US, had been the Presbytery of Nevada’s parent denomination at its beginning (!) – how many are surprised by that? However, the 1860s conditions of the **Civil War, Nevada’s statehood**, and the **north-south Presbyterian church split** quickly landed the Nevada Presbytery in the northern strand.



Which finally brings us to the second north-south reunion – about 120 years after the original split at the time of the Civil War.

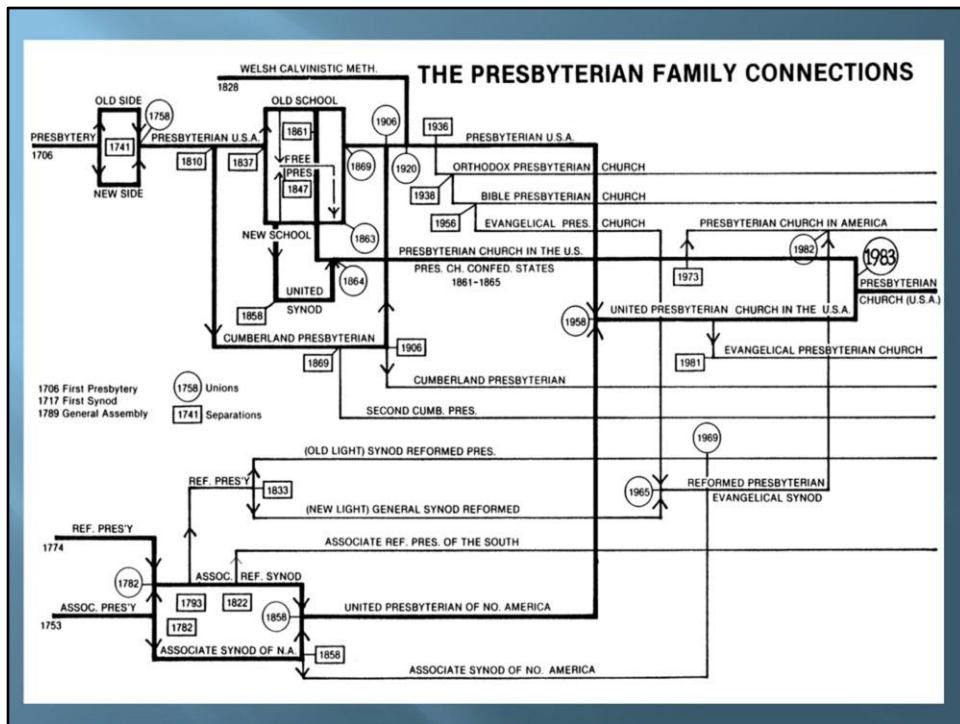
Here is the run-up:

- The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was joined by the majority of the [Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#), mostly congregations in the border and Southern states, in **1906**.
- In **1920**, it absorbed the Welsh Calvinist Methodist Church. ... and ...
- The United Presbyterian Church of North America merged with the PCUSA in **1958** to form the [United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#) (UPCUSA).

An attempt to reunite the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. with the Presbyterian Church in the United States in the late 1950s failed when the latter church was unwilling to accept [centralization](#). This reflected its support for local decision making and concern about central organizations having greater power, a historically Southern attitude about civil government as well as ecclesiastical. In the meantime, you recall, a conservative group broke away from the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1973, mainly over the issues of women's ordination and a perceived drift toward theological liberalism. This group formed the [Presbyterian Church in America](#) (PCA).

Attempts at union between these churches were renewed in the 1970s, culminating in their merger to form on June 10, 1983 – and finally reuniting [Presbyterian Church in the United States](#), whose churches were located in the [Southern](#) and [border states](#), with the [United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#), whose congregations could be found in every state. The second north-south reunion.

At the time of the merger, the churches had a combined membership of 3,121,238.^[6] Many of the efforts were spearheaded by the financial and outspoken activism of retired businessman [Thomas Clinton](#) who died two years before the merger. A new national headquarters was established in [Louisville, Kentucky](#) in 1988 replacing the headquarters of the UPCUSA in [New York City](#) and the PCUS located in [Atlanta, Georgia](#). It took years to finally effect this reunion down through the synod, presbytery and congregational levels – some may not even be “there” yet!



And so there we are – from the first century’s Apostles, Peter and Paul, to Presbyterianism in America today, warts and all.

The **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**, or **PC(USA)**, is a [mainline Protestant Christian denomination](#) in the [United States](#). Part of the [Reformed](#) tradition, it is the largest [Presbyterian](#) denomination in the U.S.

With 2,077,158 members and 13,462 [ordained ministers](#) in 10,657 congregations in 2009^[1], the reunited denomination is the most visible and influential Presbyterian denomination in North America.^[2] (The denomination reported a loss of 61,047 members (-2.9%) in 2010 and had a membership of 2,016,091 at the end of 2010.^[3]) Denominational offices are located in [Louisville, Kentucky](#) – right next to the new Kentucky Fried Chicken YUM Center sports arena, opened just in time for the Moderators’ Conference last November which I attended as the newly-elected vice moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada. The PC(USA) is a member of the [National Council of Churches](#), the [World Communion of Reformed Churches](#), the [World Council of Churches](#), and [Christian Churches Together](#).

The reunion essentially consolidated those moderate-to-liberal American Presbyterians into one body. Practically all other U.S. Presbyterian bodies (the Cumberland Presbyterians being a partial exception) profess some measure of doctrinal [Calvinist](#) propositionalism, literalist hermeneutics, and conservative politics.

For the most part, PC(USA) Presbyterians, not unlike similar mainline traditions such as the [Episcopal Church](#) and the [United Church of Christ](#), are fairly (in some instances, strongly) progressive (liberal) on matters such as doctrine, environmental issues, sexual morality, and economic issues.

Like other mainline denominations, the PC(USA) has also seen a great deal of demographic aging, with fewer and fewer new members and a steadily declining membership total.

A recent phenomenon is that of conservative-minded groups in the PC(USA) (such as the Confessing church movement) remaining in the main body, rather than leaving to form new, break-away groups, as those most theologically conservative used to do (e.g., the Presbyterian Church in America, the [Evangelical Presbyterian Church](#), the [Orthodox Presbyterian Church](#), and the [Bible Presbyterian Church](#)).

Next Week ...

- Your personal religious history since 1982...
- Our Denomination's organizational history and its context
- **Where are we? – What are we? ... now?**
- What do we believe and how did we come to it?
- Where are we going?

And that brings us to the end of today's lesson on how we got to be who we are – ready for the test?

Next week we will delve into who, what, and where we are as a denomination – at least as of today!

See you then?

Let's close in prayer.