

# Where Were You In '82?

A History of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Part 2 of 4 Parts

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First Presbyterian Church  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Good morning again and welcome back!

Are we ready to hit the road again?

Here we go!

**APA LEVEL II Certification Course (Required)**

**PC (USA) HISTORY SINCE REUNION (1983) (5 hours)**

- The Structure of the General Assembly, its units and other Entities
- The Structure of Presbyteries and Synods and their duties in the newly constituted church
- The Creeds/Confessions of our new denomination as well as important Policies established since 1983
- Names of current Stated Clerk, Moderator and other leaders of our Church
- Rationale for Reunion. What has reunion produced that was impossible without Reunion?
- Negative aspects of Reunion, i.e., losing churches and membership
- Other items as deemed necessary by the instructors
- Leader of this seminar should be “clergy” – sorry, you got me, instead.

OK –

We covered the historical facts of HIS Story and hung them on the historical facts of YOUR Stories (since 1982, anyway) in the last block – lets continue building the context with the meaning of these splits and rejoins.

Along the way, we will pick up some of the important policies that form our denomination today.

# Schedule / Overview

- 8:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

HIS story – in the Context of YOUR story

- 9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Break*
- 9:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**How did we get to wherever we are?**

- 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. *Lunch on your own*
- 1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Where are we now? -- and -- Who's Who in the Zoo?

- 2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. *Break*
- 2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Where are we going? -- and -- What does it mean to me?

The Final Exam

We now begin our second block – and when we are done, we will pause for lunch...

## Overview 2

HIS story – in the Context of YOUR story

### How did we get to wherever we are?

- The Run-up to Reunion – *the timeline*
- Where were we in '82?
- Then what happened?
- 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. *Lunch on your own*

Where are we now? -- and -- Who's Who in the Zoo?

Where are we going? -- and -- What does it mean to me?

The Final Exam

'til then, this is the map of our journey.

Again, remember,

Just as Tip O'Neil mused: "all politics is local" – so **all history is personal** – which is why we hung HIS Story on YOUR Stories.

– and –

If in real estate, its: location, LOCATION, **LOCATION**" – in history, its: "context, CONTEXT, **CONTEXT!**"

– because –

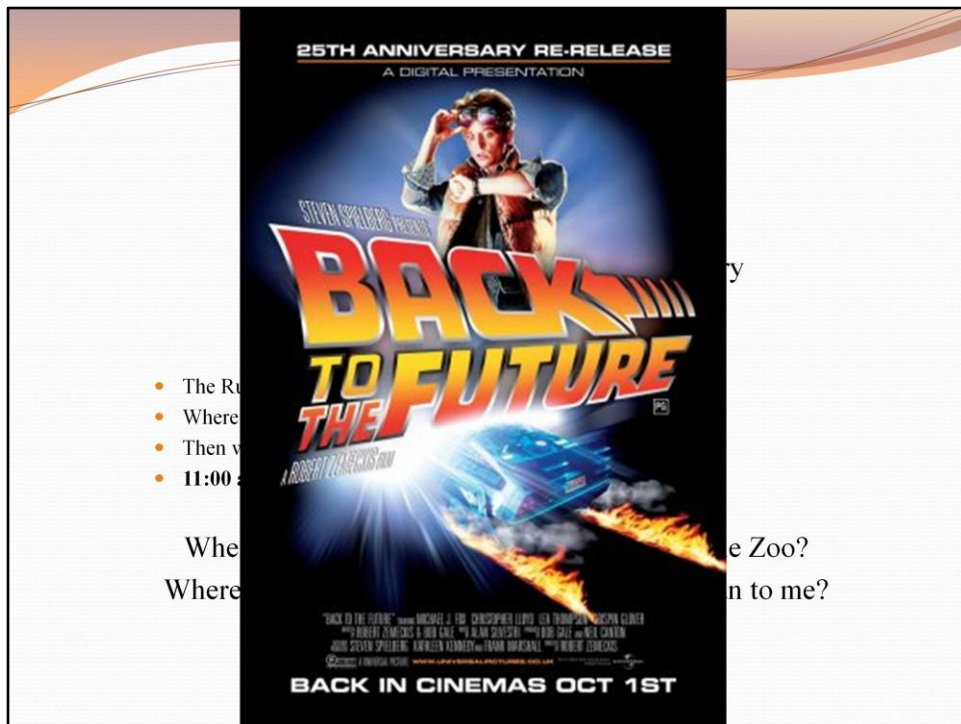
**"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."**

Let's add another: if **"you can't tell the players without a program" – "you can't appreciate the present without knowing the past."**

So lets amble back into the past -- to appreciate the *reunion* lets start with the *split*.

I think that we will find that we are really going ...

We will cover lots more stuff in this block, so strap on those seatbelts – and -- Here we go!



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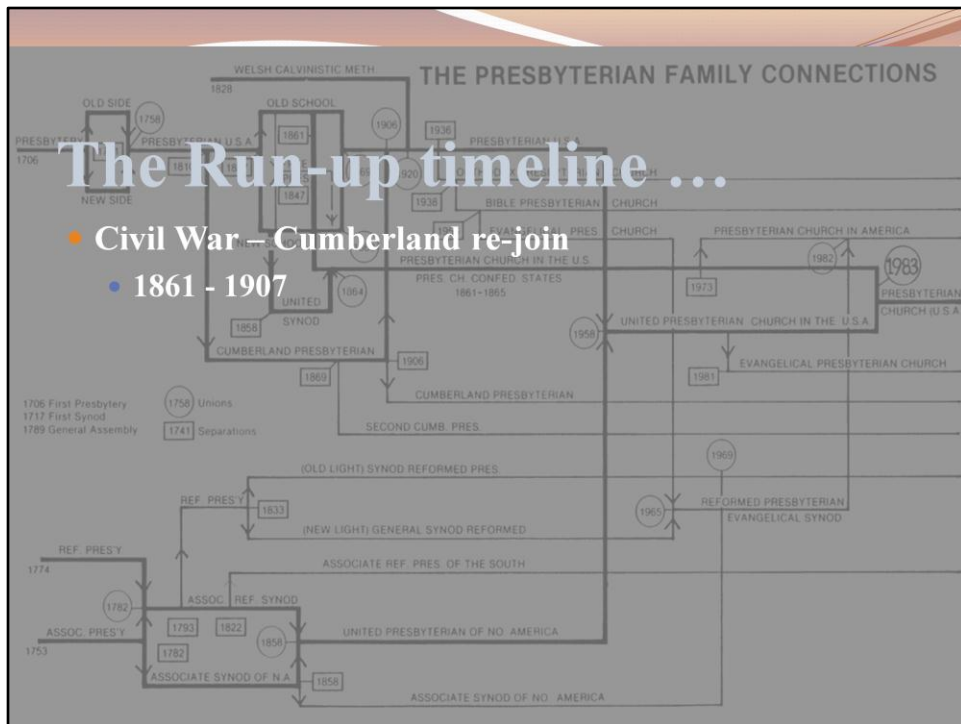
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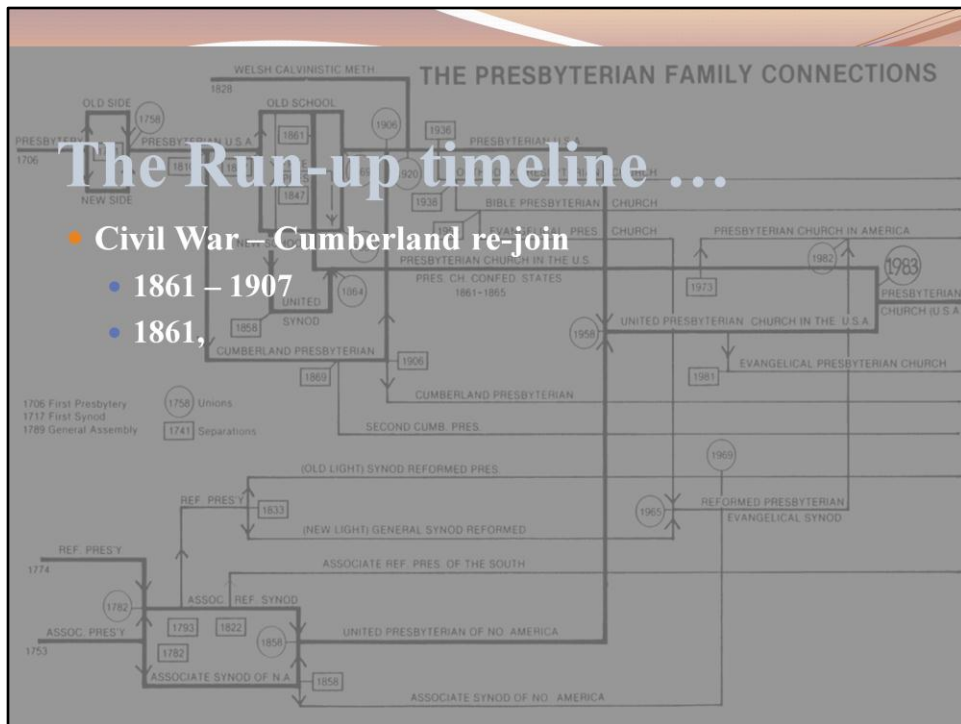
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I think that we will find that we are really going ... **Back to the Future!**

We will cover lots more stuff in this block, so strap on those seatbelts – and -- Here we go!



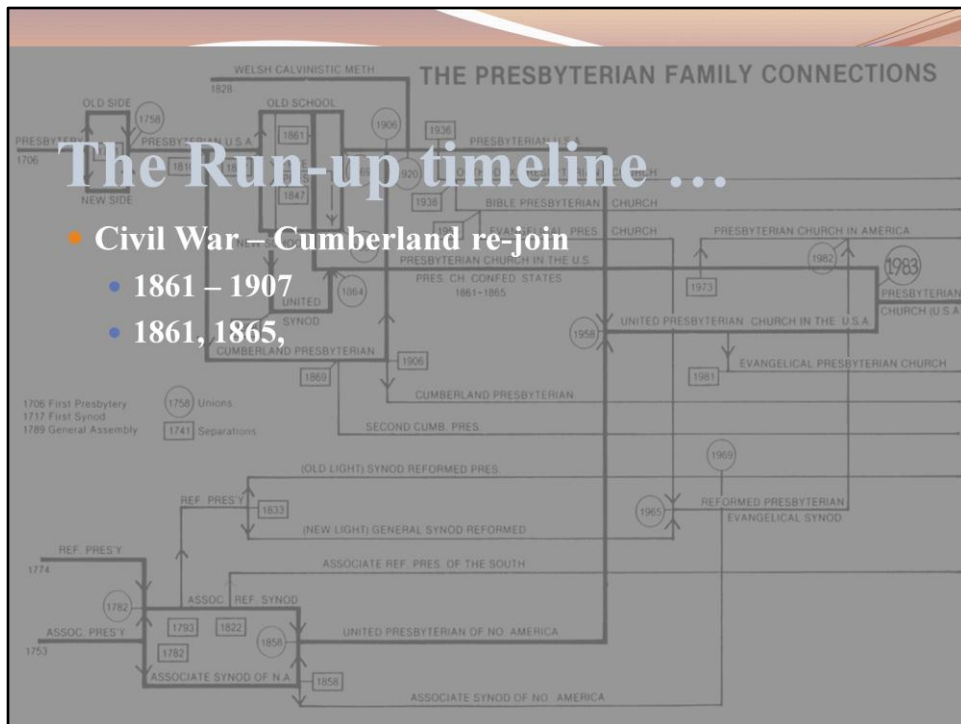
For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***



For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

1861 The two strands: In the midst of the Secession Crisis, the PCUSA General Assembly pledges loyalty to the Federal government. Southern commissioners protest and withdraw. The Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America organizes in Augusta that winter.

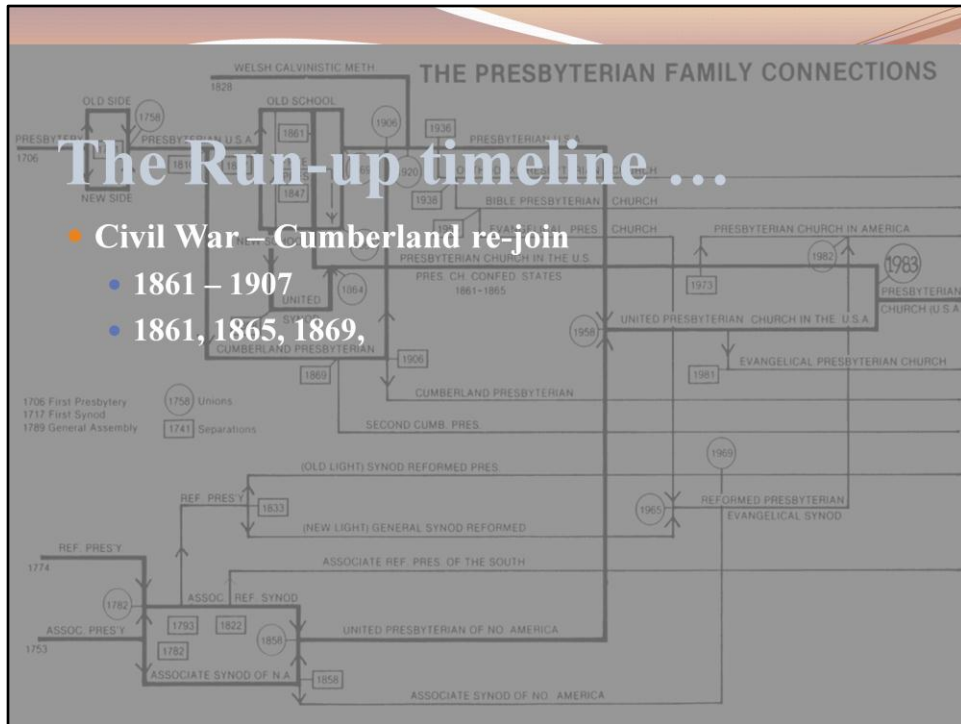




For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

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1865 Name of the southern strand, Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, changed to Presbyterian Church in the United States.



For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

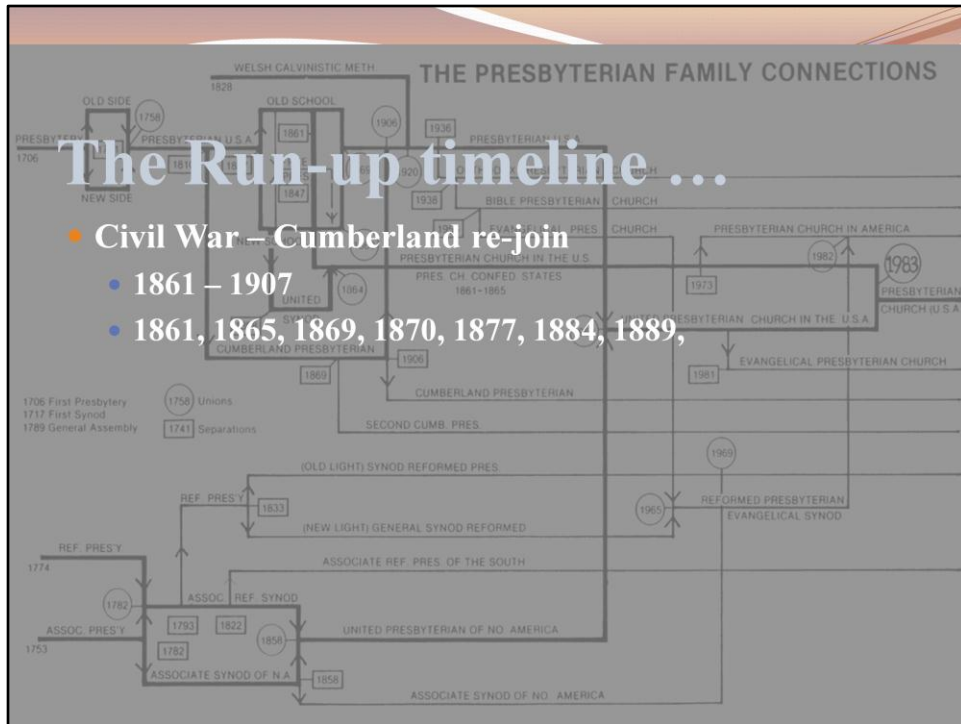
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1869 Northern strand: Reunion of the Old and New School General Assemblies in Pittsburgh, ending the first "Presbyterian Thirty Years War."





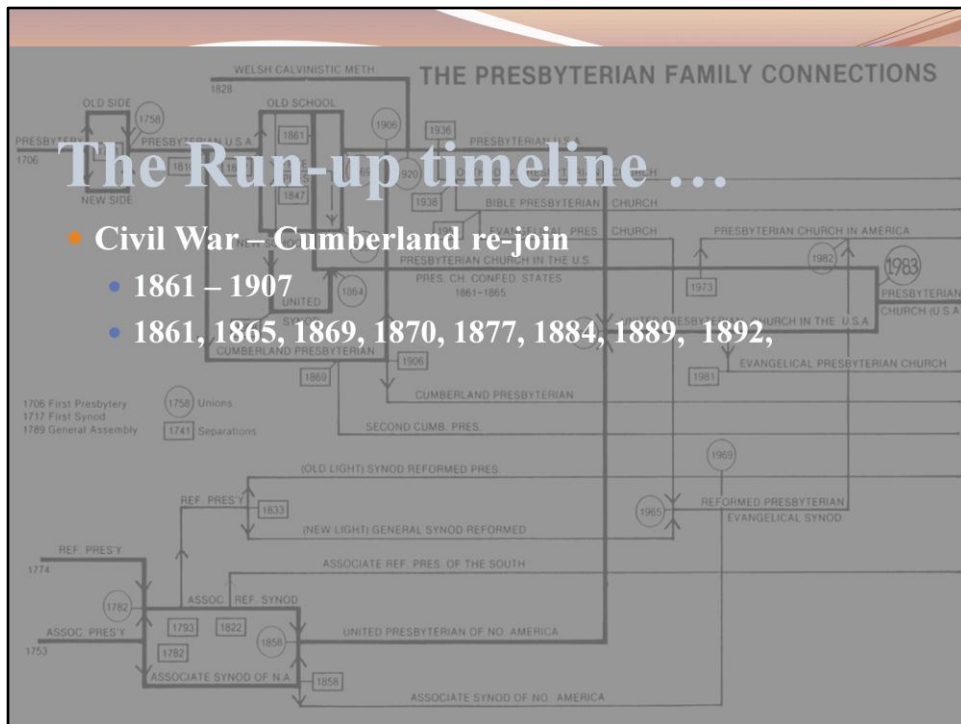




For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

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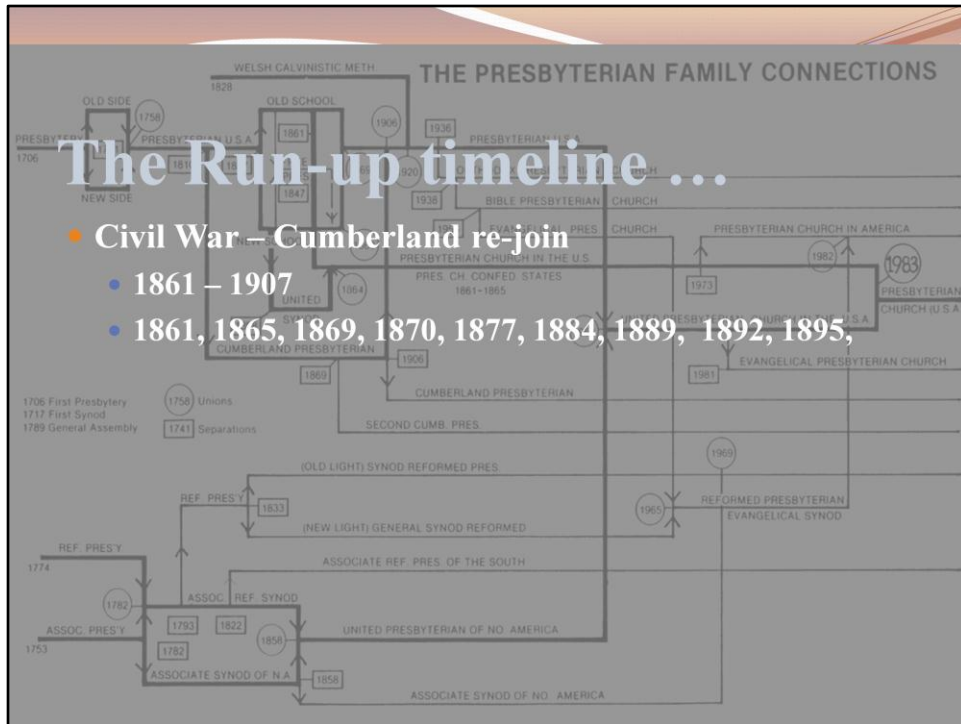
1889 Not yet in the Northern strand: Louisa Woosley, first woman Presbyterian minister, ordained in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Cumberland General Assembly refuses to recognize her ordination for two decades.



For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

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1892 Northern strand – **first Fundamentalist-Modernist show-down**: Charles Briggs, brilliant and argumentative professor at Union Seminary, NY, is embroiled one of the most publicized heresy trials in the church's history due to his "higher-critical" views of Scripture. Reacting to the controversy, the General Assembly adopts language defending the "inerrancy" of Scripture.



For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

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1895 Northern strand: The Hymnal, edited by Louis Benson, is published as an official hymn book for the PCUSA. It becomes a model for subsequent church hymn books.



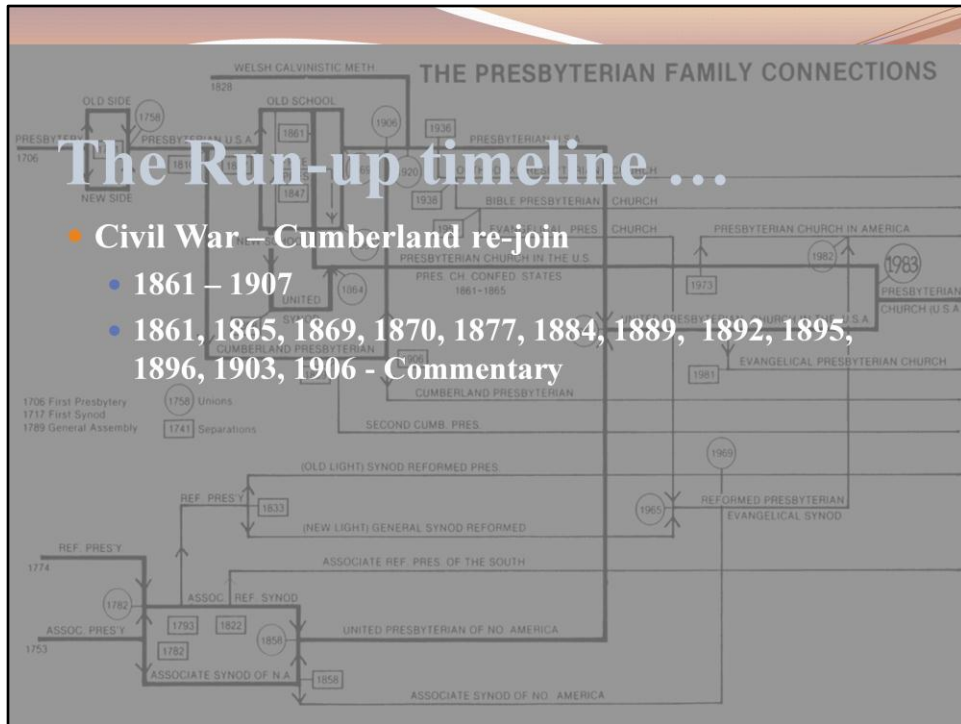


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For now – ***back to the American Civil War.***

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### Commentary on this period:

A distinctive doctrine of the PCUS was the doctrine of "the spirituality of the church" propounded by the Southern churchman James Henry Thornwell. Thornwell maintained that the church's focus was exclusively spiritual; "therefore, the church should not speak out on political or social issues but rather leave such matters to the consciences of its members."

While this was the church's distinctive doctrine, it did not always succeed in preventing discussion of social and political issues in the PCUS.

Thornwell's counterpart in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. was Charles Hodge, who debated Thornwell on church polity and governance.

The echoes of these controversies still are heard within the church.

From 1890 through 1927, the church suffered its own internal civil war between fundamentalists and modernists. At issue was, among other things, a doctrine of

biblical inspiration. The "higher criticism" of the Bible, with its interest in and reliance upon scientific methodology to aid in interpretation of the Bible, caused dissension and discussion that continues today.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the church became a "corporate" denomination.

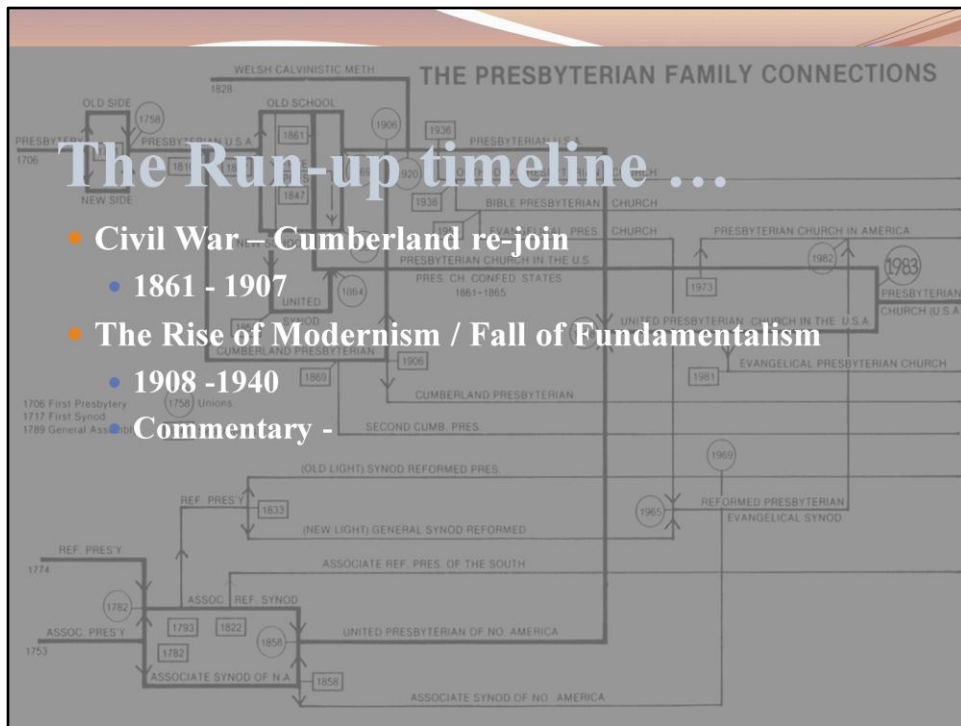
In the twentieth century the corporate denomination became the dominant image of the church for Presbyterians. The denomination as a corporation is a bureaucratic, hierarchical organization dependent on managers and capable of delivering goods and services to congregations as well as mobilizing and coordinating support of national and international mission causes. The characteristics of incorporation permeated national structures as well as congregations.

The corporate denomination gave visibility both to the concept of unity of the church and to the concept of connectionalism. It led to the first service books and denominational hymnals for worship use, it provided resources for Christian education and enabled the Presbyterian church to work ecumenically at the national and international level with other Christian bodies. The church became an effective agency for mission and social witness.

Yet the church has been uneasy with this corporate model because it challenges the concept of egalitarian and servant leadership. It has also brought changes in concepts of the professional ministry. In addition to being preachers, students, and teachers, ministers today are expected to be professional counselors, small group facilitators, competent administrators, long-range planners, and financial experts-all things to all people.

There has been continuing tension between those who believe the primary task of the church is to convert individuals or to build up church membership, and those who think its task is to be a united voice for social welfare and change.

This false dichotomy has sometimes been described as the conflict between evangelism and mission. Governing bodies have consistently maintained that the church is called to both. Parallel allegiances through members, congregations, and governing bodies have found their primary gifts in one area or another throughout our history.



## Commentary - The Twentieth Century

The trend of splitting and reunification would continue as the Presbyterian Church, both PCUS and PCUSA, moved into the new century. In the past, there were disagreements between the New Side and the Old Side, and between the New School and the Old School. However, the debate now was between the modernist (more liberal) and the fundamentalist (more conservative). “Modernism, was a school ... of theology loosely united by the belief that the proper response to modern thought is to make radical alterations in Christian doctrine.” Fundamentalists, on the other hand, rejected this modernistic perspective and closely held to historic doctrinal beliefs.

In 1910, 1916, and 1923, fundamentalists in the PCUSA presented statements to the General Assembly confirming the historic doctrines of inerrancy, the virgin birth of Christ, the atonement, the resurrection of Jesus, and the Second Coming. In response to this, those within the modernist movement signed the Auburn Affirmation, which declared their commitment to modernistic theology.

Differences would continue to grow within the church. In 1925, the moderator of the General Assembly Charles Erdman, a professor at Princeton Seminary, formed a committee to look into this modernist/fundamentalist dispute.

“After a year investigation, the committee reported back to the General Assembly that no traces of liberalism could be found in the denomination and that the cause of the controversy was due to conservatives and sincere Presbyterian ministers.”

This report would sound an alarm to conservatives, especially J. Gresham Machen.

Machen, a professor at Princeton Seminary, had been a leader in the conservative movement within the PCUSA. He fought against modernism not only in the Church but at Princeton Seminary. His final fight would be over missions. Believing that the Presbyterian Foreign Missions Board was propagating modernism abroad instead of the gospel, Machen established an Independent Missions Board. In 1936, he was brought up for trial “for insubordination because he was determined to apply the teachings of an infallible Bible to a fallible Church.” Machen and many conservatives eventually left the PCUSA and started the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in 1936. Carl McIntire would later split from the OPC and start the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC) in 1938.





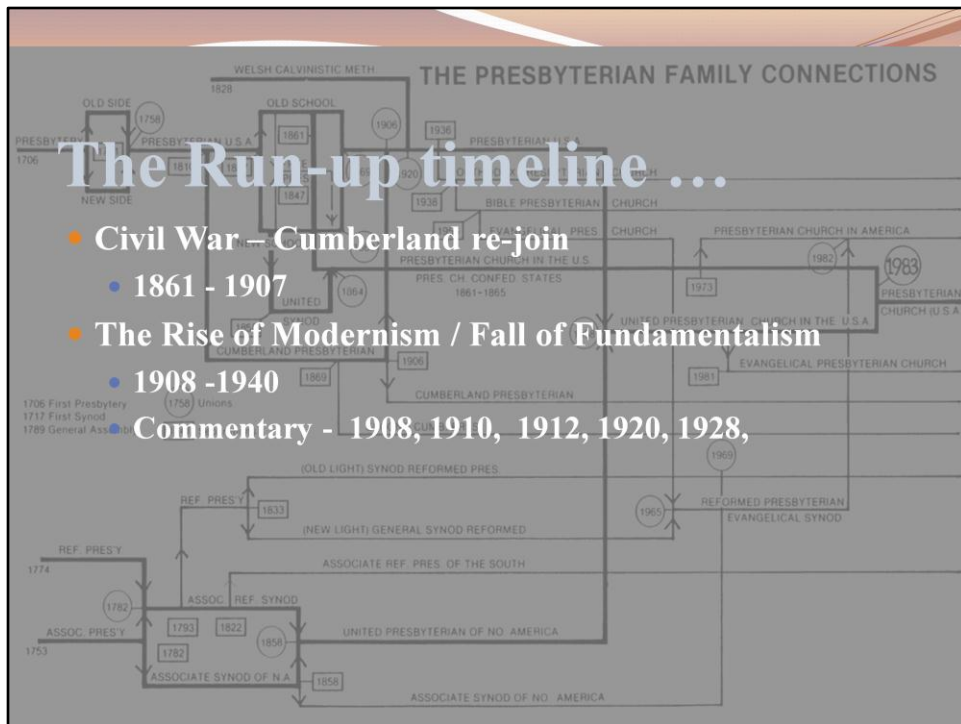


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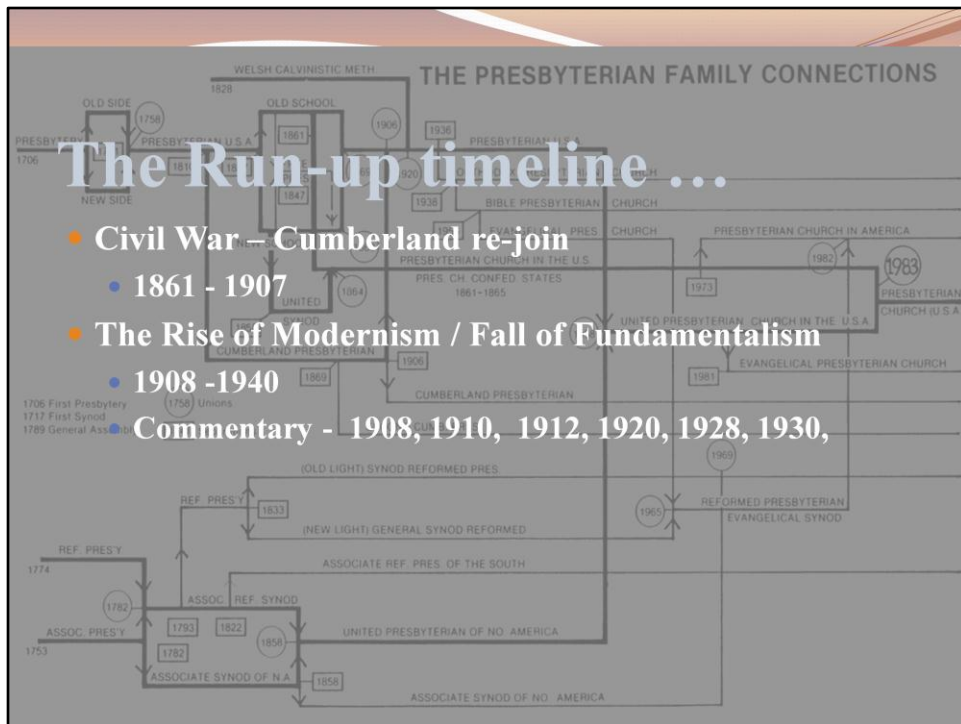


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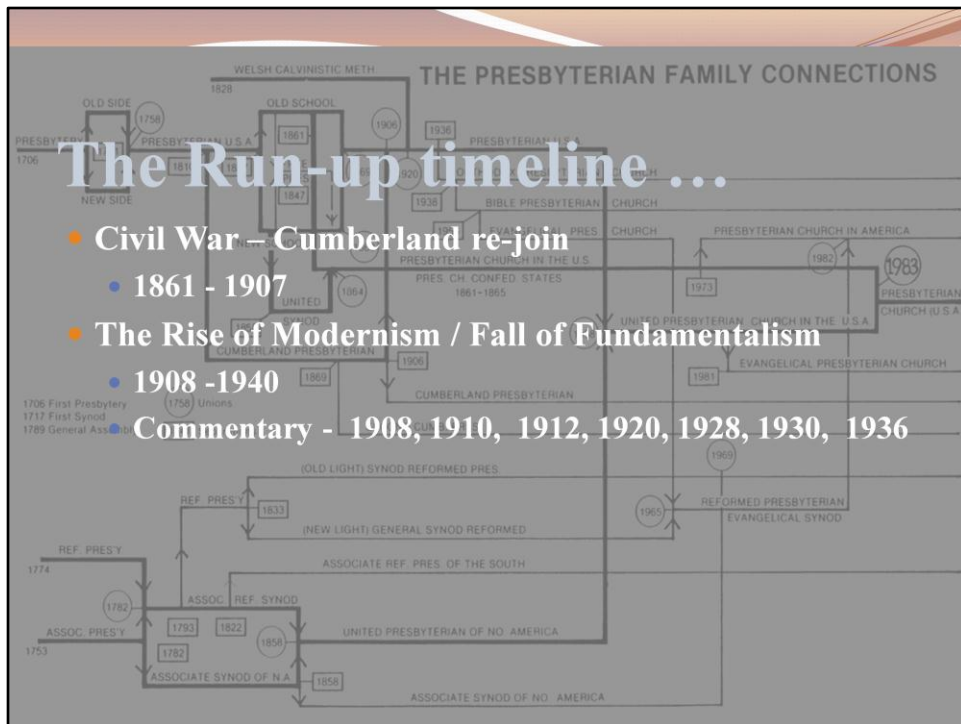
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1928 Northern strand: Norman Thomas, Presbyterian minister, runs for President as the Socialist Party candidate.



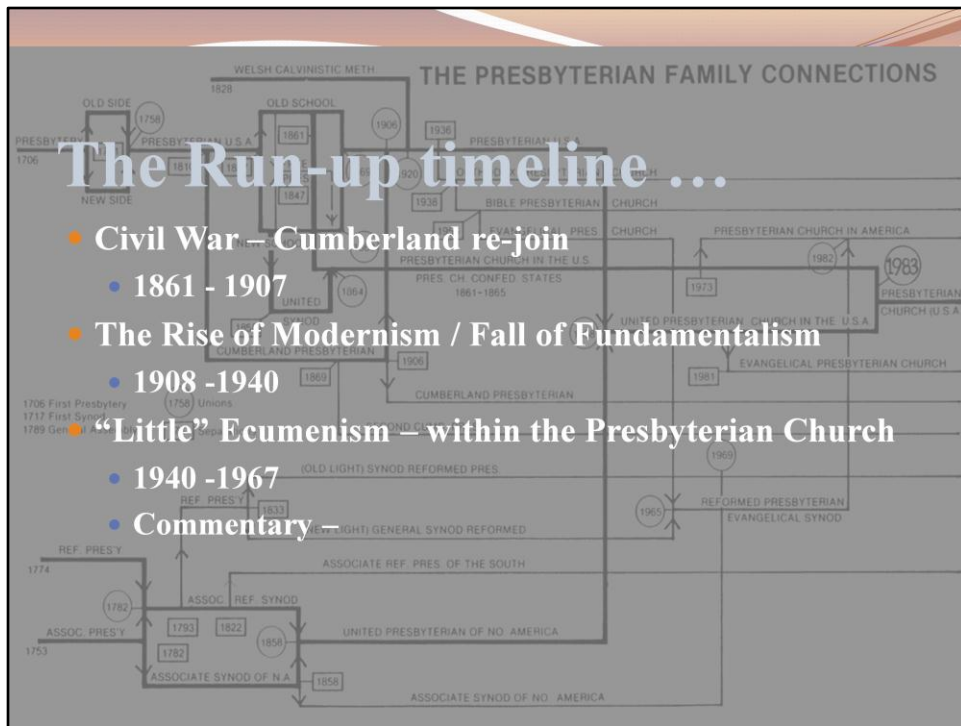
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1930 Northern strand: The PCUSA's constitution is amended to allow women to be ordained elders.



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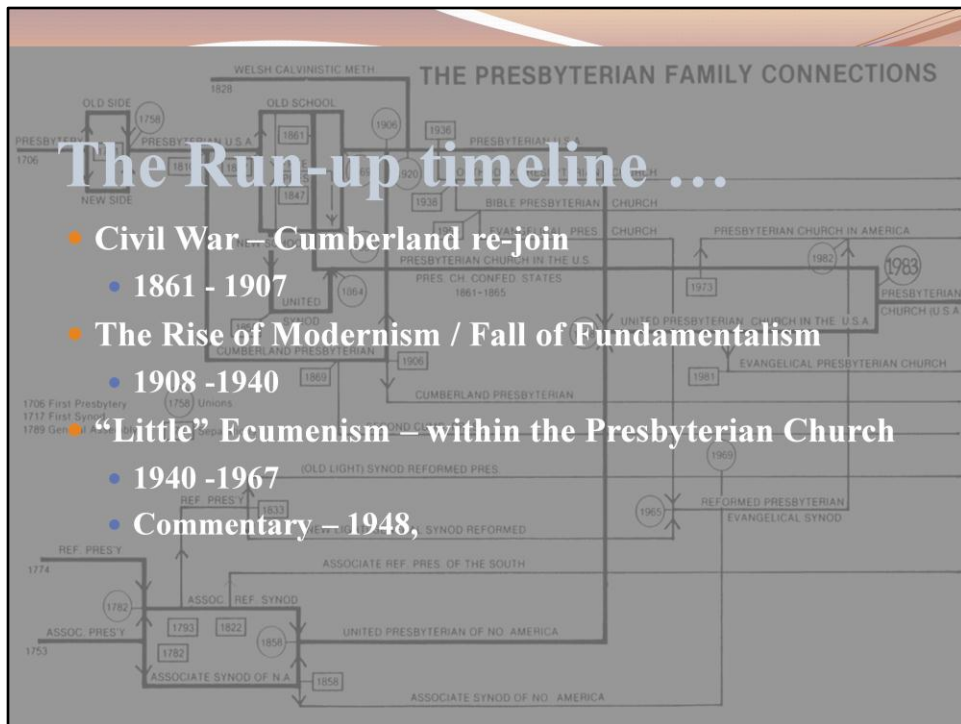
1936 Northern strand: J. Gresham Machen, minister, scholar, and author of Christianity and Liberalism (1923), leads secession from the PCUSA which becomes the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.



### Mid –Century Commentary:

In the 1950s, the PCUSA, the PCUS, and the UPCNA made plans to reunite. In 1954, a vote was held, but the PCUS voted it down on the presbytery level because of the PCUSA's more liberal theological outlook. In 1958, the PCUSA and the UPCNA did unite to form the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA). This action formed the largest Presbyterian denomination in our country.

Another major event occurred in the 1960's with the approval, by the UPCUSA, of the Confession of 1967 – and the adoption of a greatly expanded Book of Confessions (still used today). As a result, ministers were no longer required to receive and adopt The Westminster Confession of Faith and The Larger and Shorter Catechisms; rather, they were to be guided by them. This marked a major shift in Presbyterian polity, both historically and doctrinally.



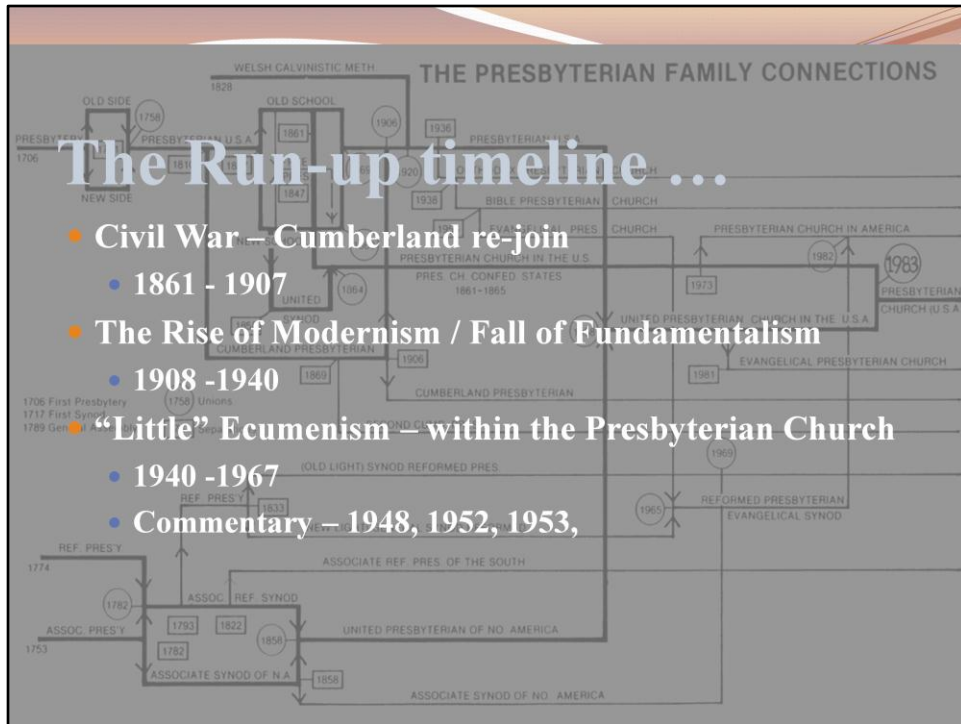
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1948 Northern strand / Southern strand: The Faith and Life Curriculum, a highly ambitious and integrated educational program launched by the PCUSA. PCUS adopts a broadly similar Covenant Life Curriculum, 1963.



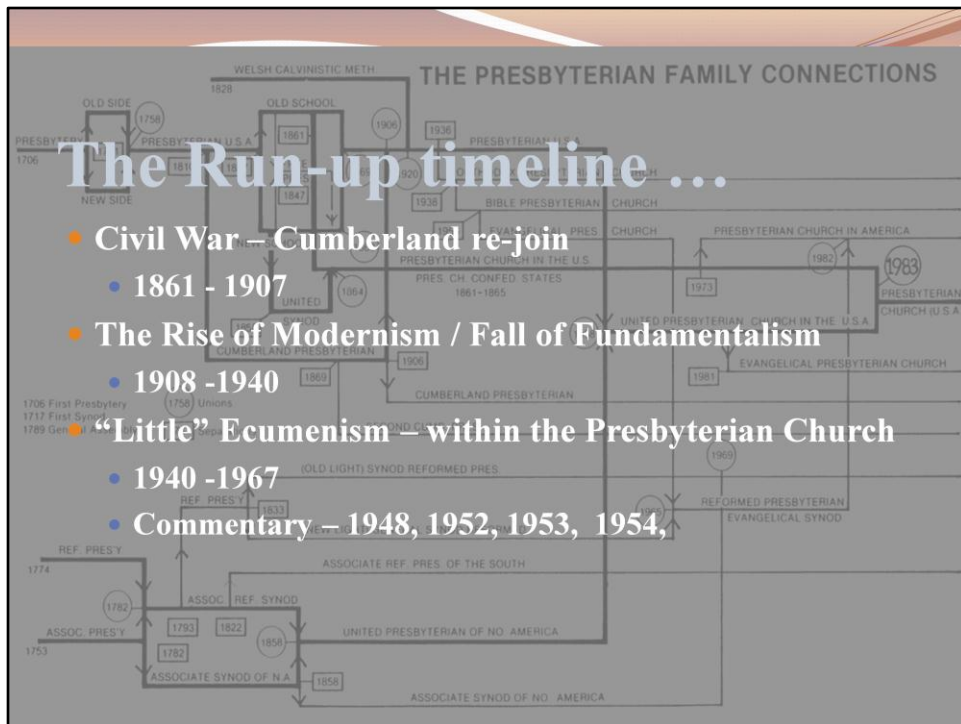


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1953 Northern strand: John Mackay, President of Princeton Seminary and Moderator of the PCUSA General Assembly decries the panic of McCarthyism in "A Letter to Presbyterians." Justice William O. Douglas, a Presbyterian, cites the "Letter" as a landmark statement against repression (1954). (Remember Norman Thomas, candidate for US President in 1928?)

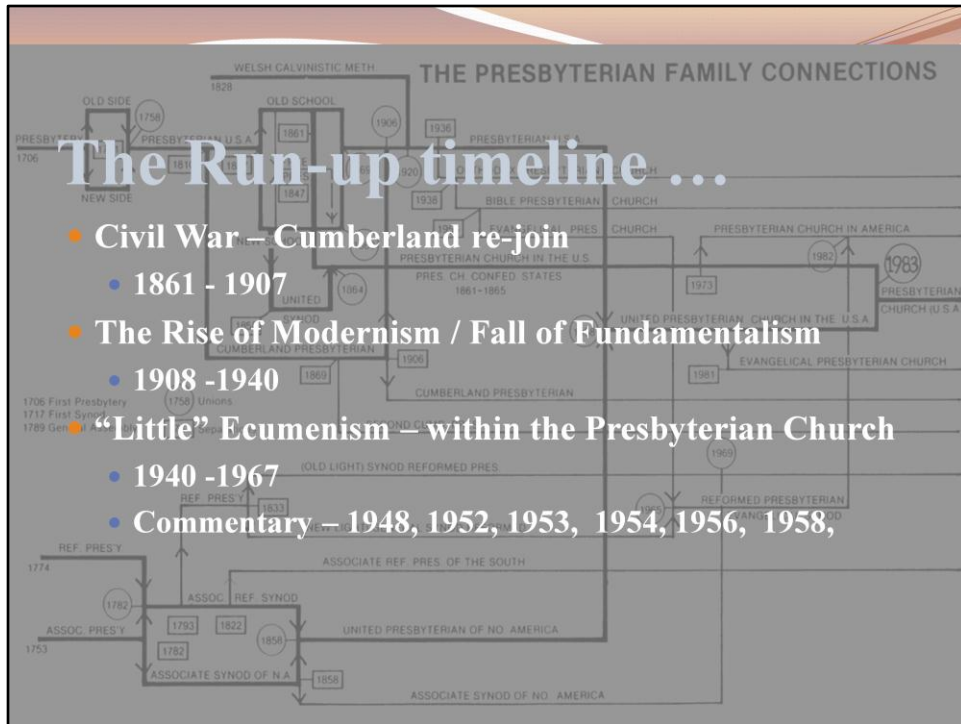


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1954 Southern strand: The General Assembly of the PCUS becomes the first church body to endorse the Supreme Court's ruling against racial segregation.

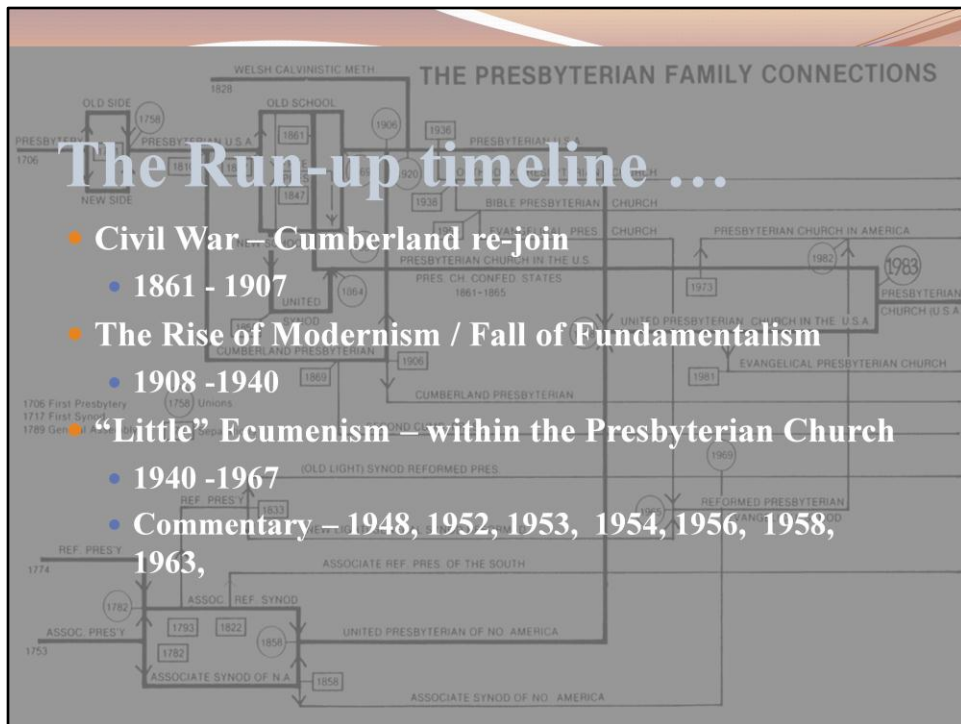


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1958 Northern strand: The PCUSA and the United Presbyterian Church of North America unite to form the UPCUSA, the largest Presbyterian denomination in the country. (The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. participated in these talks but voted against union).

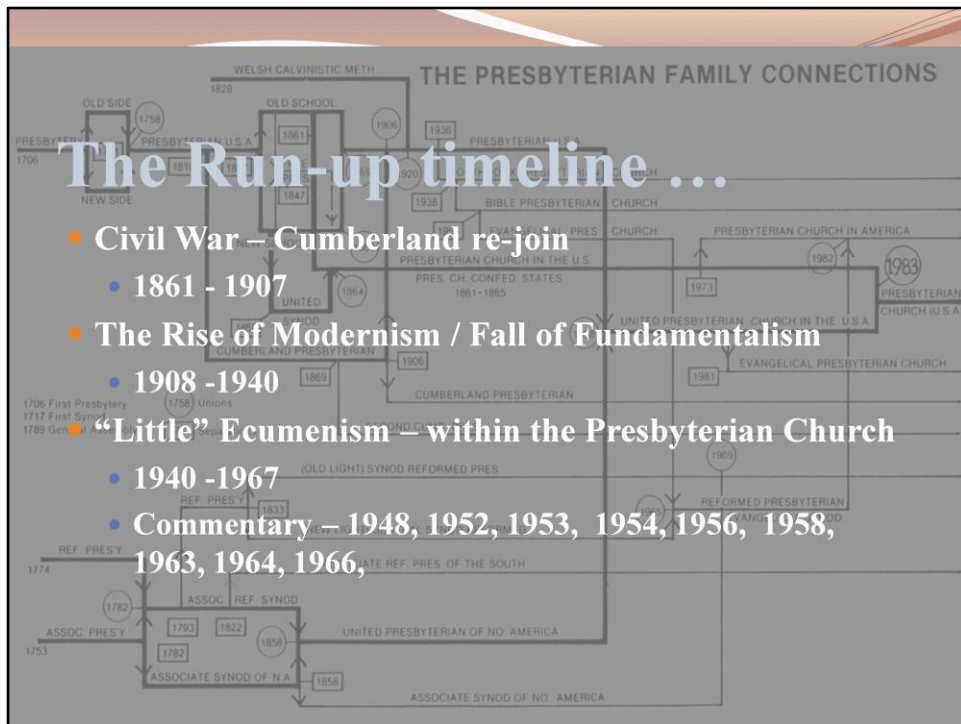


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1963 Northern strand: March on Washington. Martin Luther King, Jr., addresses crowd of 200,000. UPCUSA Presbyterian Eugene Carson Blake also among the speakers.



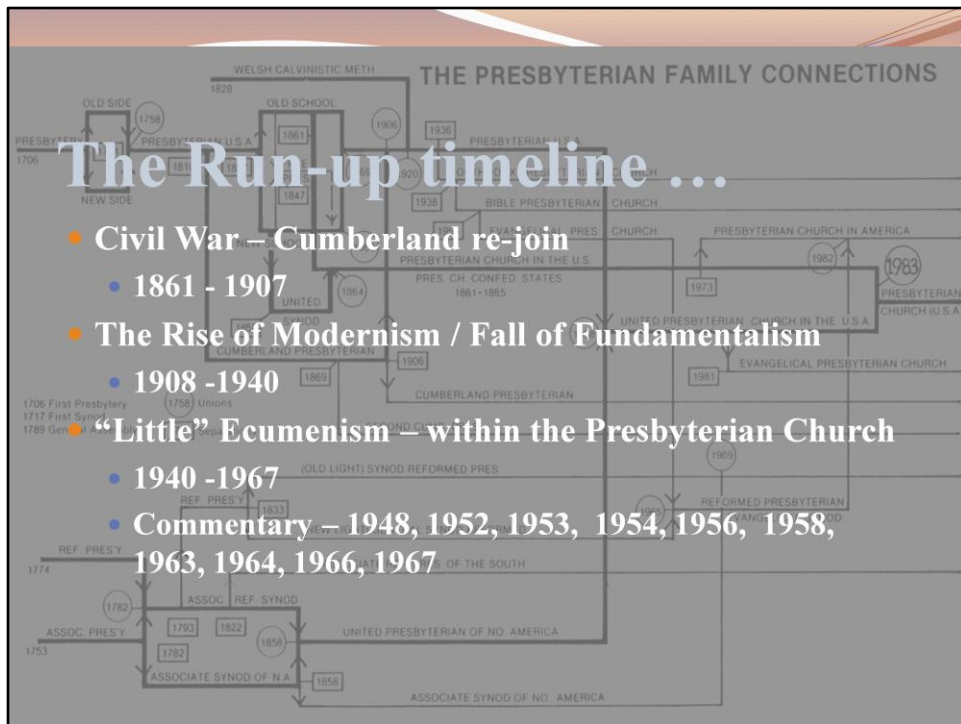
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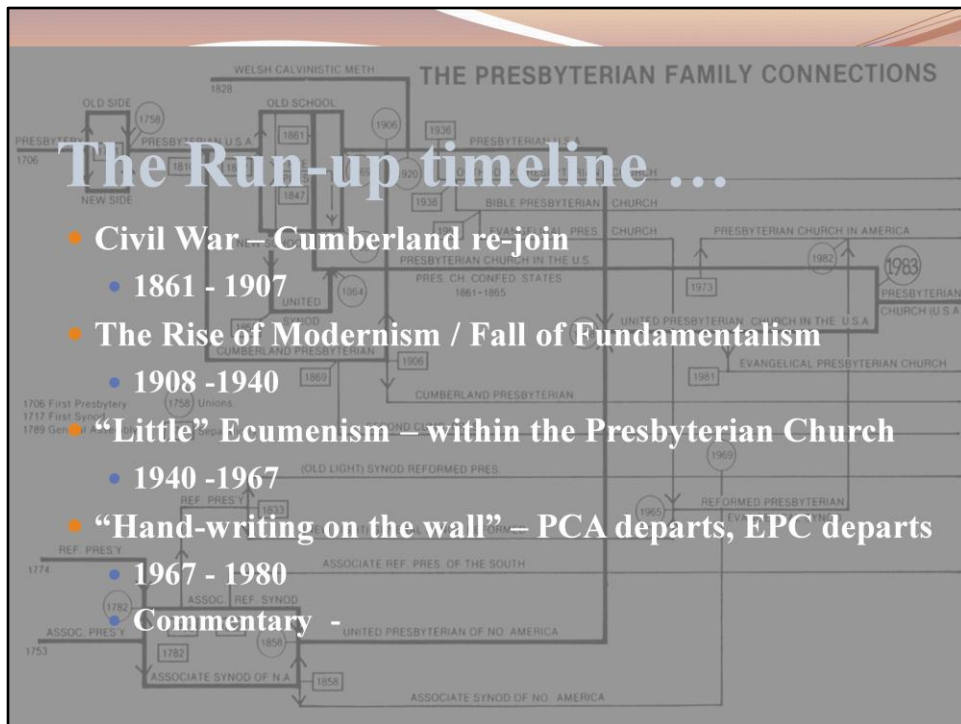
1966 Northern strand: Eugene Carson Blake, minister, Stated Clerk of the PCUSA and UPCUSA ecumenist, and civil rights leader, becomes general secretary of the World Council of Churches. An advocate of Christian unity, Blake gave early leadership to the Consultation on Church Union.





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1967 Northern strand: UPCUSA supplements the Westminster Confession with a Book of Confessions, containing Christian confessions from the fourth century to the twentieth, including the newly-drafted Confession of 1967. The same action made official the *Book of Confessions* as part of the church's constitution, along with the *Book of Order* – as we know it today.



### Commentary on the “pre-Reunion, conservative bail-out period:”

An important event occurred in 1969 when the UPCUSA and the PCUS moved closer to reunification. An agreement was reached that allowed “some individual presbyteries to belong simultaneously to the PCUS and the UPCUSA, forming union presbyteries and thus bringing Presbyterians together, especially in the border regions along the Mason-Dixon Line.”

The confessional change of 1967 and the partial reunification in 1969 caught the attention of conservatives in the PCUS. Eventually in 1973 a group of disgruntled ministers left the PCUS in order to found a new denomination, which would become known as the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Their mission was to establish a denomination that would be loyal to Scripture and the historic Reformed tradition, and committed to the spiritual mission of the Church as Christ commanded in the Great Commission.

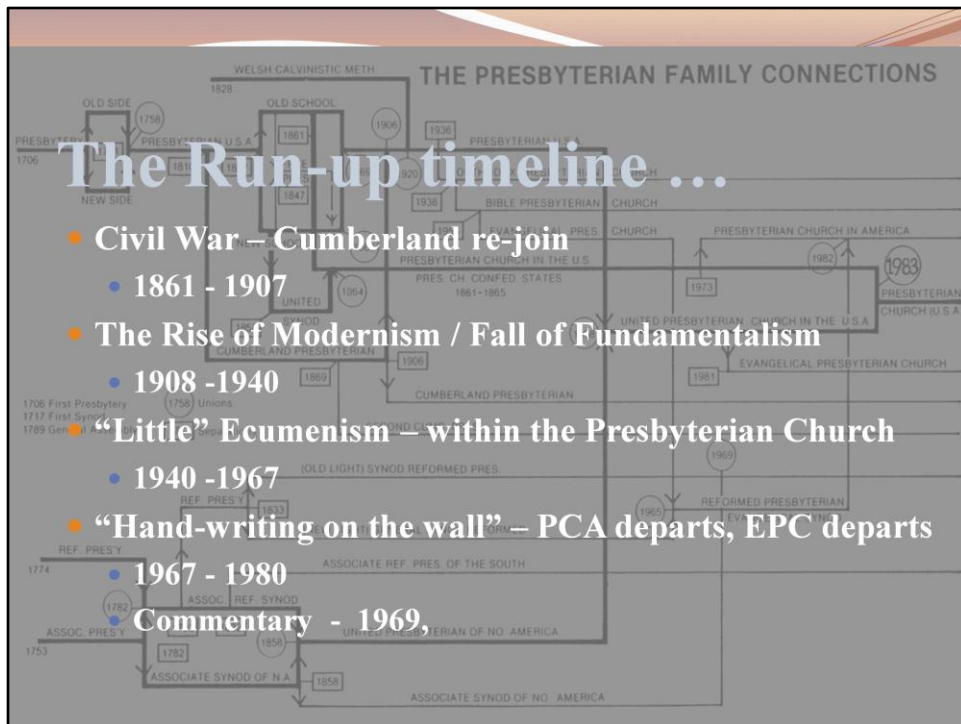
Dr. Kennedy Smartt, a founding father of the PCA, notes,

By 1971 the state of affairs in the PCUS was so abysmal that many conservatives felt we could not be true to our convictions and remain any longer in the denomination. The ordination vows were watered down by interpretation so that they really didn’t have any meaning. The assembly had refused to assert that ordination vows meant subscription to Scriptural

inerrancy. And it had approved abortion for socio-economic reasons. The social agenda had replaced evangelism and missions as the primary mission of the church... I repeat many of us felt we had no choice but to leave.

Another reason many PCUS ministers left to create the PCA was because they feared the eventual reunification with the more liberal UPCUSA. Moreover, it was widely believed that once there was reunification, any church that wanted to leave in order to found a new denomination would probably lose their property.

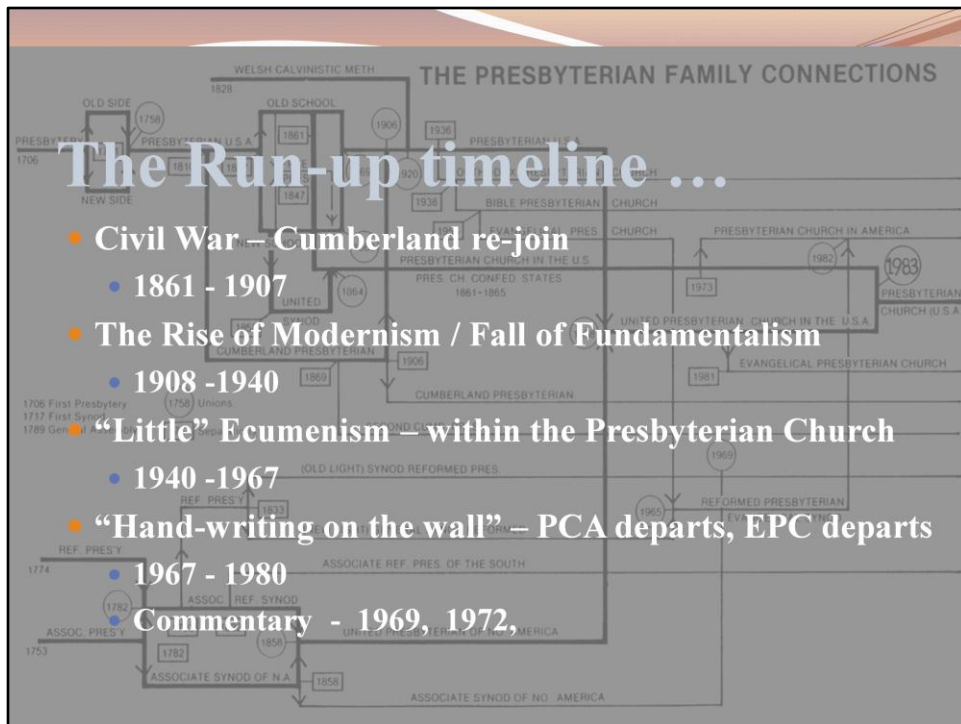
Eventually, in 1983 the reunification of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) did take place. However, this did not occur before a group of conservative ministers in the UPCUSA left in 1981 to form the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). Furthermore, in 1982, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod joined the PCA making it the second largest Presbyterian denomination behind the PCUSA.



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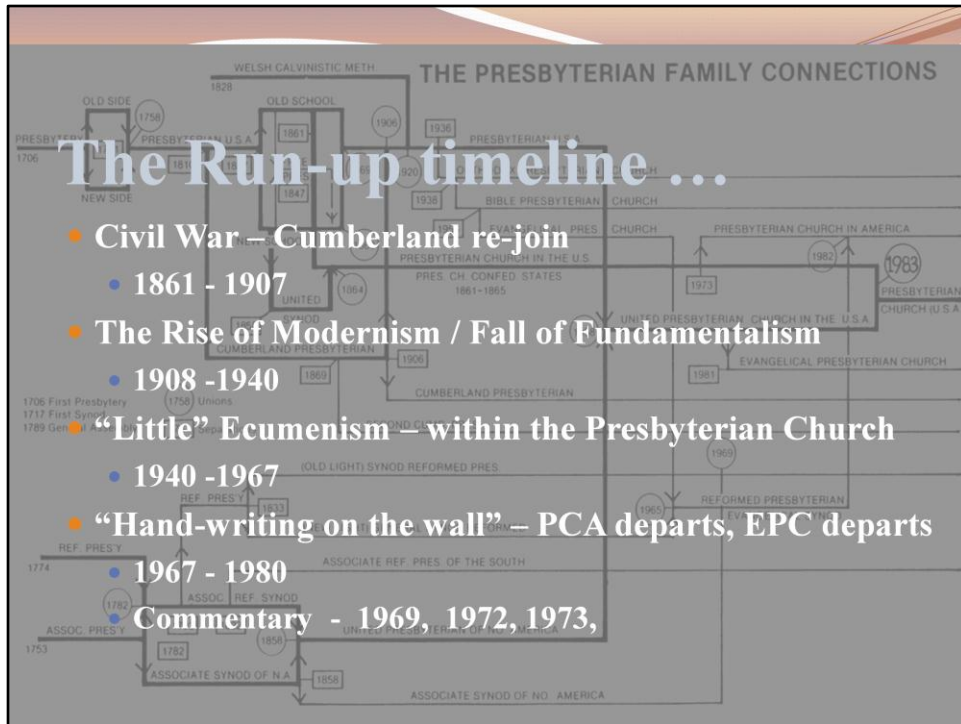
1969 Southern strand: Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. catch the ecumenical spirit – and cast necessary votes for union with the Reformed Church in America, but Reformed Church votes against the union.

Presbyterian Church in the U.S. General Assembly invites the northern strand, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to join negotiations aimed at reunion; a Joint Committee on Presbyterian Reunion is formed.



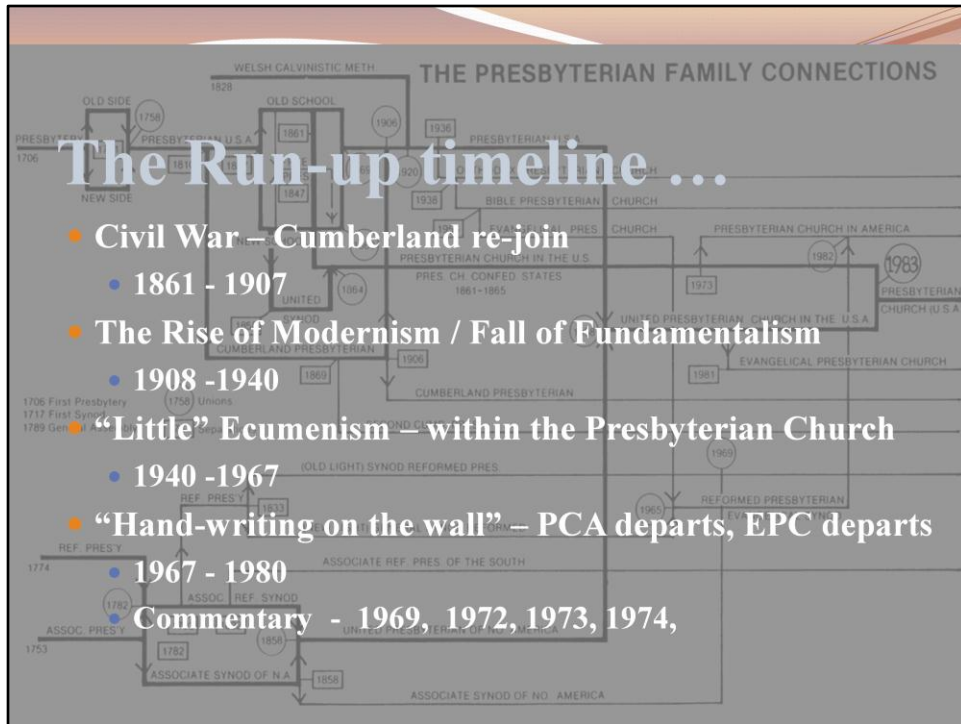
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1972 Northern strand: Elder Lois H. Stair elected first woman moderator of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Six years later, Elder Sarah Moseley elected first woman moderator of the GA, PCUS, 1978.



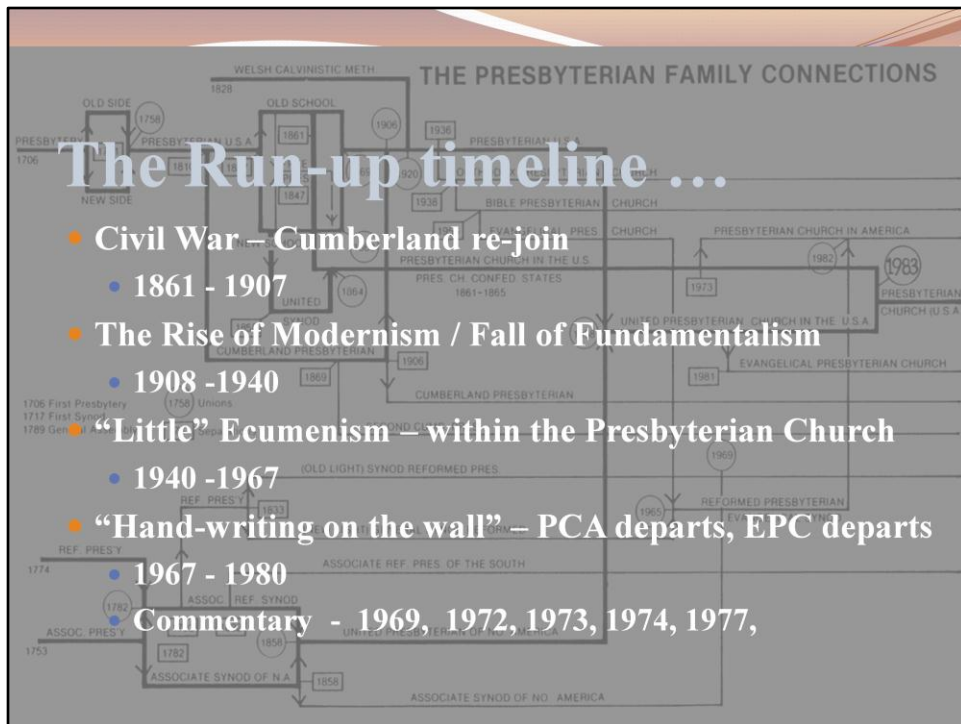
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1973 Southern strand: Some 250 churches and 50,000 members separate from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and form the National Presbyterian Church, later changed to the Presbyterian Church in America.



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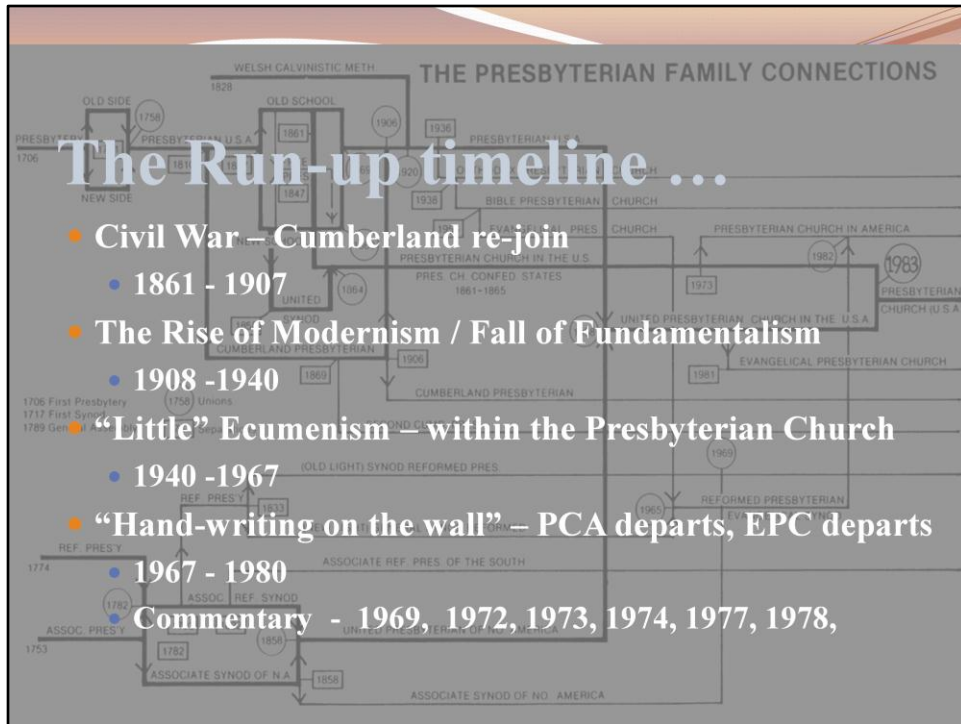
1974 Southern strand: The Rev. Lawrence Bottoms elected first African American moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.



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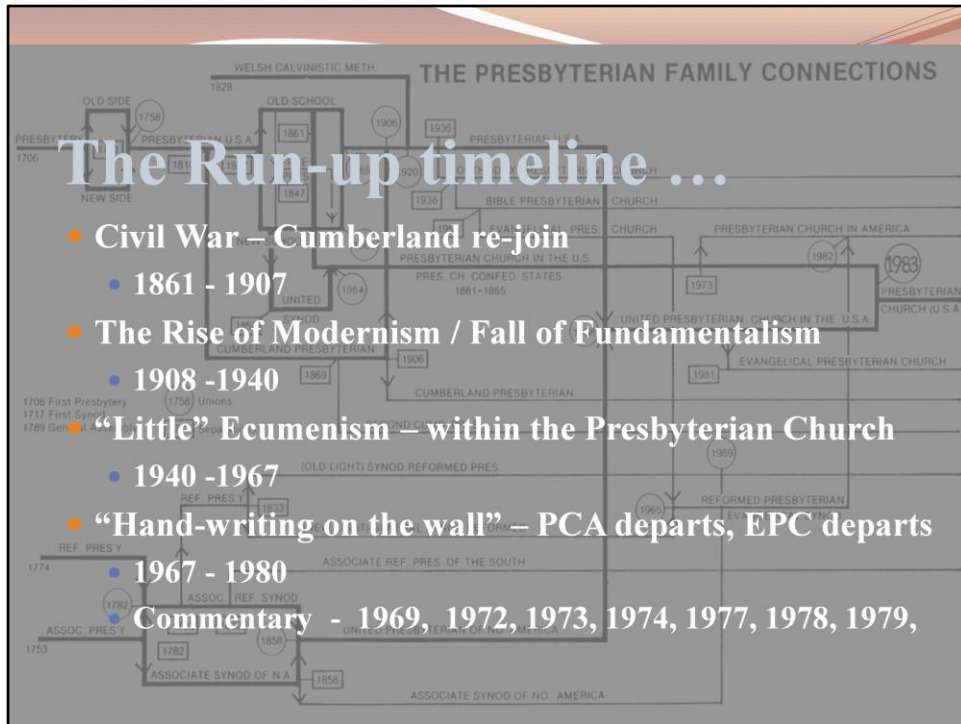
1977 Northern strand / Southern strand: General Assemblies of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. agree to meet in the same cities at the same time every other year.





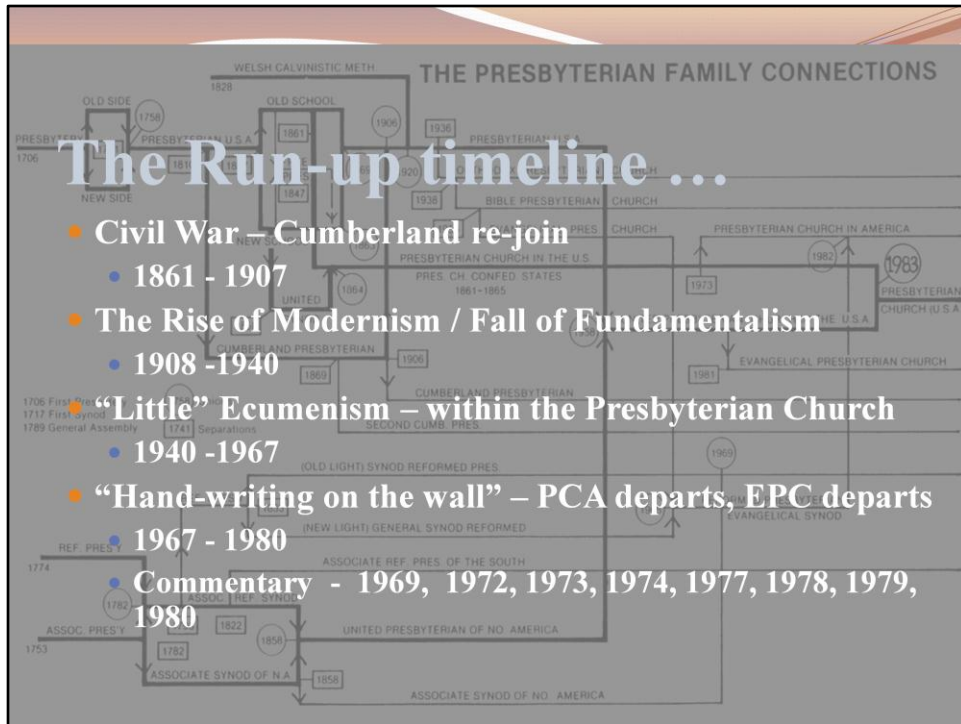
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1978 Northern strand: The United Presbyterian Church in the USA General Assembly adopts a “definitive guidance” that “self-affirming, practicing homosexuals” are not eligible for ordination to church office.



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1979 Southern strand: The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. adopts a similar policy on ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians to church office.



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1980 Northern strand / Southern strand: Joint Committee on Presbyterian Reunion votes to send a plan for union to the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1982 with ratification by presbyteries proposed during 1982-83, and final General Assembly approval sought in 1983.



### Commentary on the “First Northern strand / Southern strand reunion:”

The PCA began talks and plans with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod for a merger of “joining and receiving” and by 1981 invited them in. Recall that the RPCES had been formed in 1965 by a merger of the [Evangelical Presbyterian Church](#) (an offshoot of the [Bible Presbyterian Church](#) and not the [current denomination](#) by that name) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod – which had maintained a direct historical tie to the [Scottish Covenanter](#) tradition in its history. For these two churches it was probably a necessary consolidation.

1982 Conservative Northern strand / Southern strand: With the respective presbyteries’ approvals, the PCA “joined and received” the RPCES – who brought with them two important things: a more nationally-based membership, and a college and seminary, the latter of which the PCA did not yet have, relying instead on independent evangelical institutions such as [Reformed Theological Seminary](#) in [Jackson, Mississippi](#) and [Westminster Theological Seminary](#) in [Philadelphia](#) (though the RTS had received its initial support at the time of its founding in the mid-1960s by PCUS pastors and churches that would ultimately join the PCA. One notable figure from the RPCES was [Francis Schaeffer](#).

Moderate/Liberal Northern strand / Southern strand: For the second reunion – the two General Assemblies in Columbus, GA. (PCUS) and Hartford, CT.

(UPCUSA), call for their presbyteries to vote on reunion.

1983 Moderate/Liberal Northern strand / Southern strand: Presbyteries of the UPCUSA approve reunion 151-0 and presbyteries of the PCUS approve reunion 53-8.

Presbyterian Church (USA) born June 10 resulting from reunion ratification by the General Assemblies of the former Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA.

The Rev. J. Randolph Taylor of Charlotte, NC, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Presbyterian Reunion, is elected the first moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Elder William P. Thompson (UPCUSA Stated Clerk) and the Reverend James E. Andrews

(PCUS Stated Clerk) were elected co-clerks of the newly formed denomination. For one year, Andrews and Thompson served as co-interim stated clerks, vowing that neither would be a candidate in 1984, when the first stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) would be elected. But both men were drawn into the heated race. Andrews won. Thompson then retired.

As a measure of the calibre of people who have led our church listen to the former General Assembly Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick – who issued the following statement shortly after Elder Thompson’s death:

*The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has lost one of its greatest and best leaders in the passing of William P. Thompson. Speaking on behalf of the staff of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), Presbyterians worldwide, and the ecumenical community of faith, I add my condolences to his wife Mary and the entire Thompson family.*

*Those who worked with Bill called him a “living legend.” He provided leadership to the church in a variety of capacities, which included serving first as Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and later as Stated Clerk of the same denomination; and as president of both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the National Council of Churches in Christ. He teamed up with Jim Andrews, his counterpart as Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to work to bring to reality the 1983 reunion to form our present-day PC(USA).*

*Bill had a deep interest in Presbyterian history. During his tenure, the OGA’s Department of History was transformed from a limited denominational*

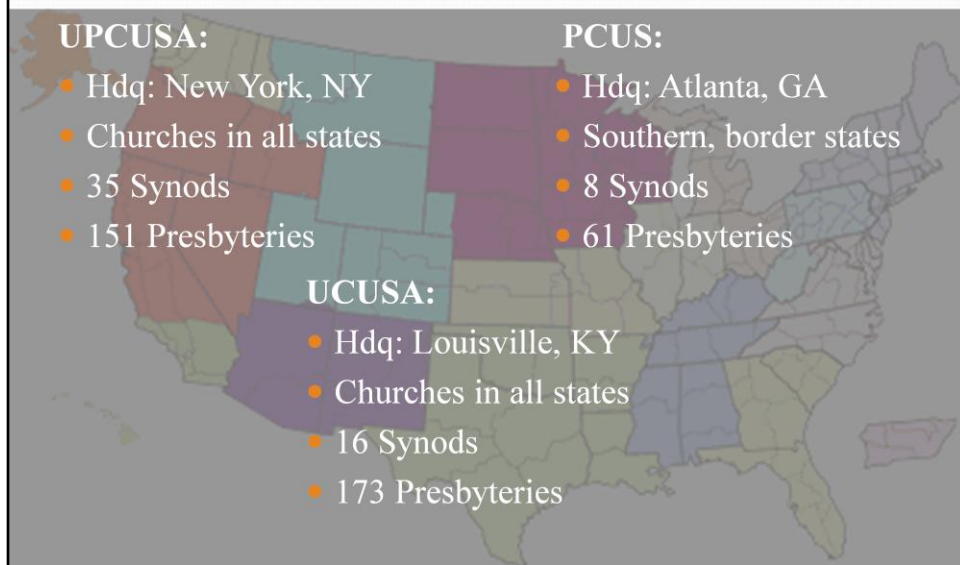
*national library and archives into a comprehensive ecumenical resource center.*

*Bill was a recognized leader in the ecumenical movement. He was tireless in his advocacy for human rights, and he used well his skills as a mediator and reconciler.*

*I have lost a good friend with the passing of Bill. I will especially miss his wisdom and keen insight. He truly loved this church.*

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps. 23:6).

## So what did Reunion do in practical terms?



**So – how do you put this thing together?** Well, decently and in order, of course. The churches had agreed to a 17 page document titled the Articles of Agreement – which is Appendix B to our current *Book of Order*. I will let you read the details tonight, but here are the highlights:

### APPENDIX B ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT PREAMBLE

The Articles of Agreement embody the contractual commitments of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of

America concerning the means by which the confessional documents, members, officers, judicatories, courts, agencies, institutions and property of those Churches shall be and

become the confessional documents, members, officers, judicatories, courts, agencies, institutions and property of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Articles of Agreement

record the details of the reunion. Their contents demonstrate the continuity of the reunited

Church with each of its antecedents. ...

Immediately upon the formation of the reunited Church, its **new Constitution** will be operative. It, rather than the Articles of Agreement, is the basic document of the single church and is subject to amendment in accordance with its provisions.

#### **ARTICLE 1. CONTINUITY – “Keep on keeping on!”**

1.2 Each and every member ...

1.3 Each and every ordained officer, whether minister, ruling elder or deacon...

1.4 Each and every congregation ...

1.5 Each and every pastoral relationship between a pastor, co-pastor, associate or assistant pastor and a congregation ... Any existing relationship as lay preacher or commissioned church worker shall be undisturbed ..., but only for so long as the individual holding such relationship continues that relationship to the same particular church.

1.6 Each and every Session, Presbytery and Synod ...

1.7 The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be the highest governing body of that Church and the successor to [its antecedents].

1.8 Each and every board, agency, institution and committee ... shall have the same relationship to

the appropriate governing body ...

1.9 Each and every policy statement adopted by or issued ... shall have the same force and effect in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as in the Church which adopted or issued it until rescinded, altered or supplanted by action of the General Assembly

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

#### **ARTICLE 2. TRUSTEES AND CORPORATE STRUCTURES – ... and “Make it so!”**

2.1 Each and every trustee and corporate structure of the congregations, judicatories, boards, agencies and institutions ..., together with all property, real and personal, held by them shall be the trustees and corporate structures of

the congregations, governing bodies, boards, agencies and institutions of the Presbyterian

Church (U.S.A.). ...

2.2 The continuity and integrity of all funds held in trust by such trustees or corporations shall be maintained, and the intention of the settlor or testator as set out in

the trust instrument shall be strictly complied with. ...

#### **ARTICLE 3. CONFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS**

3.1 The confessional documents of the two preceding Churches shall be the confessional documents of the reunited Church. ...



3.2 The General Assembly of the reunited Presbyterian Church shall ... prepare a Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith for possible inclusion in *The **Book of Confessions*** ....

3.3 Until then ... the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) accepts *A Brief Statement of Belief* (of) 1962, as a summary of the Reformed understanding of historic Christian doctrine

set forth in Scripture and contained in the Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ...( which) shall be utilized with the Confessions of the Church in the instruction of Church members and officers, in the orientation and examination of ordinands prior to ordination, and of ministers seeking membership in Presbyteries by transfer from other Presbyteries or other Churches.

#### **ARTICLE 4. THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

4.1 The work of the Office of the General Assembly immediately following reunion shall be provided for as follows:

The offices of the two highest governing bodies of the uniting Churches shall be continued

for a period of one year after the effective date of the reunion in order to assure the orderly transfer of records and functions to an office of the new highest governing body.

During such transition period the stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the United

States and the stated clerk of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America shall ... recommend the assignments to and an organizational structure for the Office

of the General Assembly.

4.2 Not later than nine months after the effective date of the union, the General Assembly Council shall select a Special Committee on Nominations for Stated Clerk ... whose names shall be presented to the General Assembly not later than forty-eight hours prior to its adjournment.

#### **ARTICLE 5. TRANSITIONAL COMPOSITION AND WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL AND AGENCIES**

... The General Assembly Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (consisting of the members remaining after election of the General Assembly Council) and the Program Agency, the Support Agency, and the Vocation Agency ... will continue to administer

the programs, previously conducted by each of them, for five years unless earlier terminated

by action of the General Assembly. ...

The General Assembly Council shall develop and propose to subsequent General Assemblies

a design for the work of the General Assembly which will effectively relate the functions, divisions, agencies, councils, commissions and institutions of the General Assemblies

of the reuniting Churches not otherwise provided for in these Articles of Agreement, ....

Agencies whose functions will be served by other bodies or in other ways in the reunited

Church will not be continued. ...

5.5 The General Assembly Council ...shall ensure the continuance of an organized approach

in the areas of world mission, evangelism, education, church renewal, church extension

and social-economic justice within the context of the unity of Christ's Church throughout the world.

The General Assembly Council shall take particular care to design agencies and to commit major resources, both human and financial, to put into action with other Churches and agencies, in this land and other nations, ministries that serve the purpose of

the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to confront men and women, structures and principalities,

with the claims of Jesus Christ.

5.6 The General Assembly Council in its development of a design for the work of the General Assembly shall also ensure the continuance of the advocacy and monitoring

functions of the existing Councils on Church and Race (both denominations), Committee

on Women's Concerns (Presbyterian Church in the United States) and Council on Women and the Church (The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America).

Until such time as the design for work of the General Assembly is completed and these functions are ensured, the existing structures and functions of these bodies shall be maintained.

5.7 As the various boards, agencies, councils and offices of the General Assemblies of the reuniting Churches continue to function within the life of the reunited Church, or as new agencies are created at the time of reunion, and especially as consideration

is given to the location or locations of General Assembly offices and agencies, care and sensitivity shall be shown employed personnel. The General Assembly Council

shall ensure continuity of employment at comparable levels insofar as possible. As staff

vacancies occur, they shall be filled in accordance with the church-wide plan for equal employment opportunity (G-13.0201b) and the principle of full participation (G-4.0403).

The General Assembly Council shall provide for an equitable termination policy.

#### **ARTICLE 6. LOCATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S AGENCIES**

6.1 The General Assembly Council shall immediately appoint a representative committee to examine with professional consultants the values of establishing a single

location or multiple locations for the General Assembly's agencies. The committee shall

propose a possible location or locations. The committee shall suggest a timetable for the

move, if relocation is involved.

#### **ARTICLE 7. SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PRESBYTERY AND SYNOD BOUNDARIES**

7.1 A Special Committee on Presbytery and Synod Boundaries shall be formed to work with the governing bodies where Presbyteries and Synods of the existing Churches overlap and for other Presbyteries and Synods as necessary. ...

7.3 The Special Committee shall set in motion a procedure whereby overlapping Presbyteries and Synods, through negotiation, shall consult in developing a mutually acceptable plan for Presbytery and Synod boundaries which shall become effective within five years following reunion. ...

7.5 The Special Committee shall report annually to the General Assembly ... full geographical consolidation shall be accomplished no later than ten years following the

uniting General Assembly.

7.6 In cases involving Presbyteries based on racial ethnic or language considerations, or Presbyteries whose membership consists predominately of racial ethnic persons, plans for realignment shall be completed within ten years or, if that is not accomplished,

upon application for continuance of the process, which may be granted by the General Assembly, within fifteen years after the uniting General Assembly.

...

#### **ARTICLE 8. RACIAL ETHNIC REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATIONS**

8.1 The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall provide for a Committee on Representation for each governing body above the Session. ...

Its main function shall be to guide the governing bodies with respect to their membership and to that of their committees, boards, agencies and other units, in implementation of the principles of participation and inclusiveness, to ensure effective representation in the decision making of the church.

8.2 Governing bodies of the Church shall be responsible for implementing the Church's commitment to inclusiveness and participation ....

## **ARTICLE 9. WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATIONS**

9.1 The Committees on Representation ... to ensure the fair representation of women, both of the majority race and of racial ethnic groups, in the decision making of the Church.

9.2 The General Assembly Council in consultation with elected representatives from each recognized women's group of both Churches shall make provision for the continuation of the women's programs and organizations of the two Churches at all levels, ...and is expected to complete [this] work in six years.

## **ARTICLE 10. INSTITUTIONS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

10.1 The reunited church has continuing responsibility for its institutions of theological education. These institutions are charged to prepare women and men for ordained ministries and other vocations of professional church leadership and to provide strong theological resource centers for the leadership of the whole church.

10.2 Theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States: (Five Seminaries listed) and of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: (Seven seminaries listed) shall continue into the reunited Church with their present boards, charters and plans of governance.

10.3 The present pattern of financial support ... [and] ... Levels of financial support ... shall continue so that each receives a similar percentage of the total amount allocated by the governing bodies in the year prior to reunion.

10.4 A Special Committee on Theological Institutions shall ... [and] ... review the relationships between theological institutions and the ... reunited Church and study the system of funding ... with particular attention to be given to the developmental needs of Johnson C. Smith Seminary, which uniquely

serves the constituency of Black Presbyterians. .... At or before the sixth General Assembly of the reunited Church, it shall make a final report with recommendations concerning the way theological institutions are to be funded through the governing bodies.

10.6 The Council of Theological Seminaries of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Committee on Theological Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States shall continue with their present functions and membership. ...

#### **ARTICLE 11. PENSION, ANNUITY, INSURANCE, BENEFIT, ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF PROGRAMS**

11.1 ... the Board of Annuities and Relief ... and the Board of Pensions ... shall continue to function under their charters as separate corporations until their responsibilities are assumed by ... a legally responsible corporate body established under a civil charter and having no responsibilities other than to administer these plans and programs and to assume the responsibilities of the former Board(s) ....

#### **ARTICLE 12. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS**

12.1 The General Assembly of the reunited Church shall determine its ecumenical relationships, provided that the reunited Church shall initially continue in relationship to those bodies to which either of the uniting Churches had been related prior to reunion.

#### **ARTICLE 13. PROCEDURES FOR DISMISSAL OF A CONGREGATION WITH ITS PROPERTY**

13.1 The provisions of this article ... shall not alter, abridge or nullify in any way the principles as to the ownership of property in either antecedent Church or in the reunited Church as established by ecclesiastical and civil law.

...

13.4 Any petition for dismissal with property filed later than eight years from the consummation of union shall be handled under the appropriate provisions for such a request in the Form of Government.

#### **ARTICLE 14. PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING REUNION**

...

14.5 The first act of the General Assembly shall be to convene in worship of Almighty God and for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The election of a

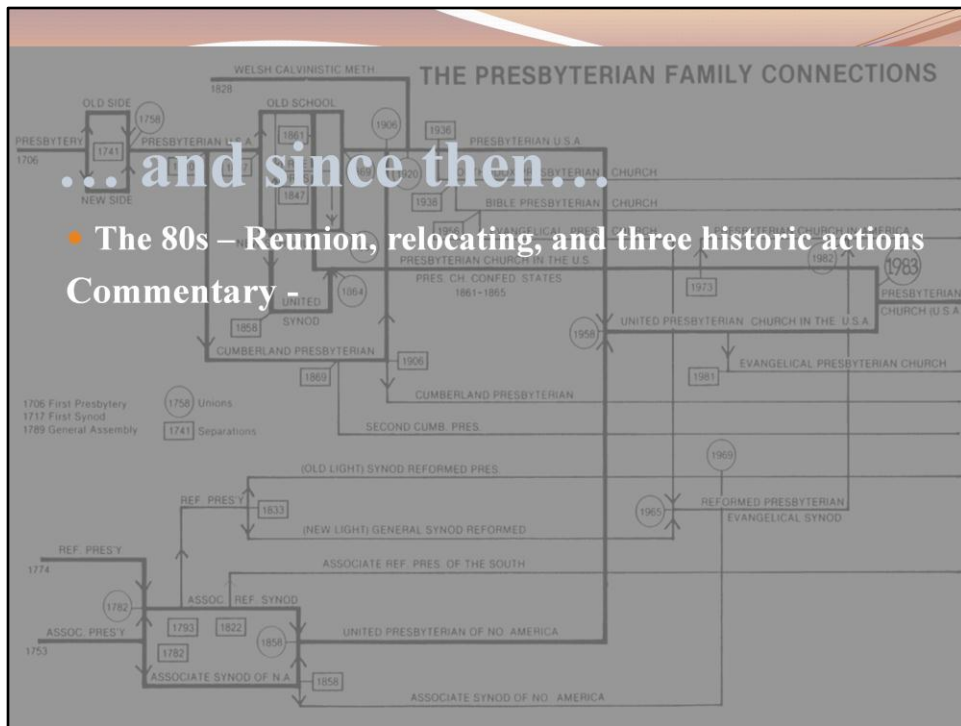
moderator

shall be a nearly item on the docket of the first meeting of the General Assembly

which

shall follow the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

***Altogether, these actions took about a decade to complete.***



## Commentary – Property was – and is – a big issue!

### Constitutional Musings: Note 13, Three Actions Taken at Reunion in 1983

The Office of the General Assembly has been called upon to differentiate among three distinct, unrelated actions taken by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s General Assembly at the time of reunion in 1983 regarding church property:

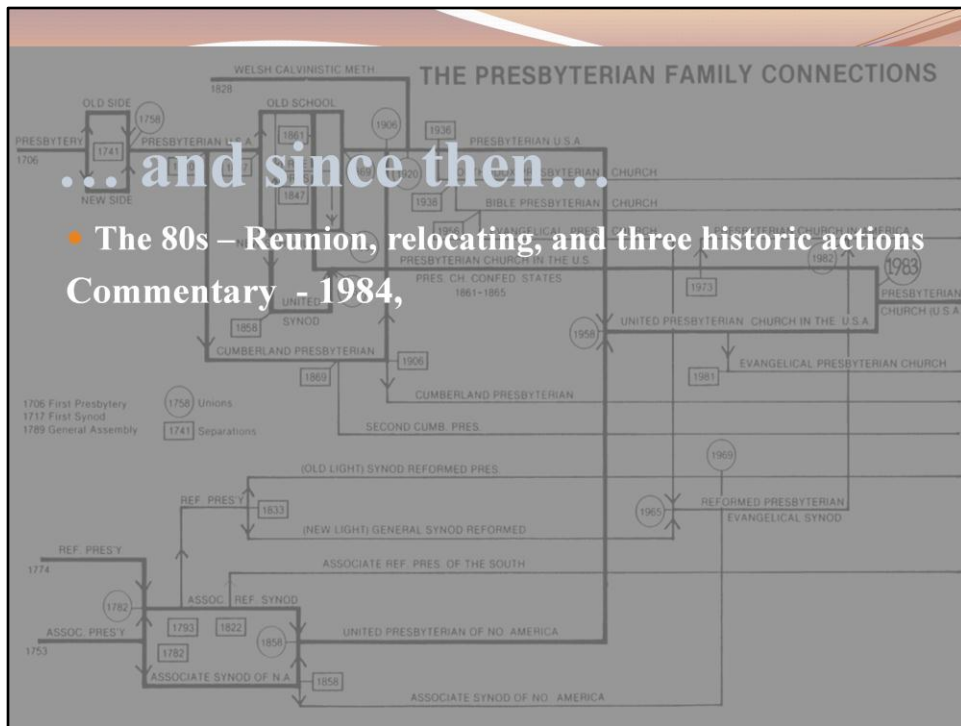
1. The 195th General Assembly (1983) of the newly formed PC(USA) approved the **trust clause** at G-8.0201. Virtually identical clauses existed in the *Book of Order* of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPC) and the *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS). These earlier clauses were a direct response to an invitation in 1979 by the United States Supreme Court. (But this was the second time the United States Supreme Court had studied our polity as it related to church property. In 1871 the Court noted an implied trust in connectionalism found in our *Form of Government*.)
2. The same assembly also adopted G-8.0701, which permitted former PCUS congregations to deal with their property as they had under the PCUS *Book of Church Order*. By the time of reunion in 1983, Chapter 6 of the PCUS *Book of Church Order* contained a trust clause that allowed PCUS congregations to **encumber their property without the presbytery's permission**. With reunion, such PCUS congregations had to vote within an 8-year window (ending in 1992) to continue to

operate under Chapter 6 and the presbytery had to be informed of that decision and record it in its minutes. G-8.0701 preserves the right of those congregations that took the election to encumber real property without seeking the permission of the presbytery (this is the ONLY exception covered by G-8.0701.) UPC congregations never had such a right.

3. The 1983 assembly also adopted Article 13 as part of the Articles of Agreement, which provided former PCUS congregations a **one-time window to leave the PC(USA) with their property**. That window closed in 1992. There are NO “Article 13 churches” remaining in the PC(USA).

The GA Council considered these the important events in the church - for their media timeline in 2004. you will see glimpses of how the Articles worked out – and some interesting history of the day:





...

1984 Elder Harriet Nelson of Napa, CA., is elected moderator.

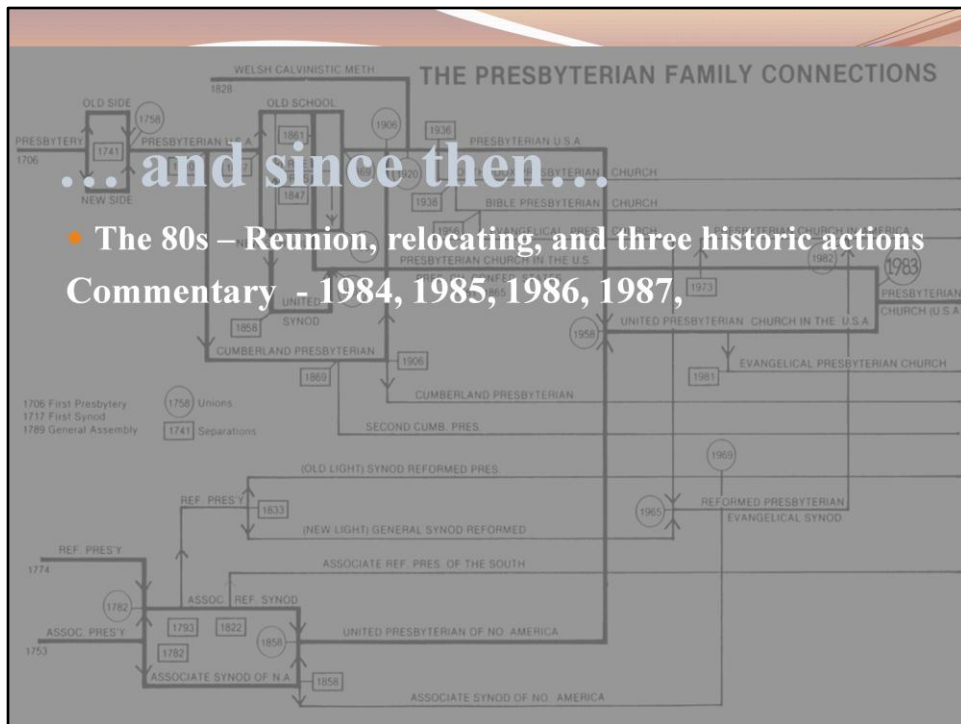
- The Rev. James E. Andrews, stated clerk of the former PCUS and co-stated clerk the first year, is elected first stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA) – with subsequent re-elections, he will serve for 12 years, nearly half of the denomination's life.

Presbyterian Ronald Reagan elected President.



1985 Elder William Wilson of McAllen, TX, is elected moderator.

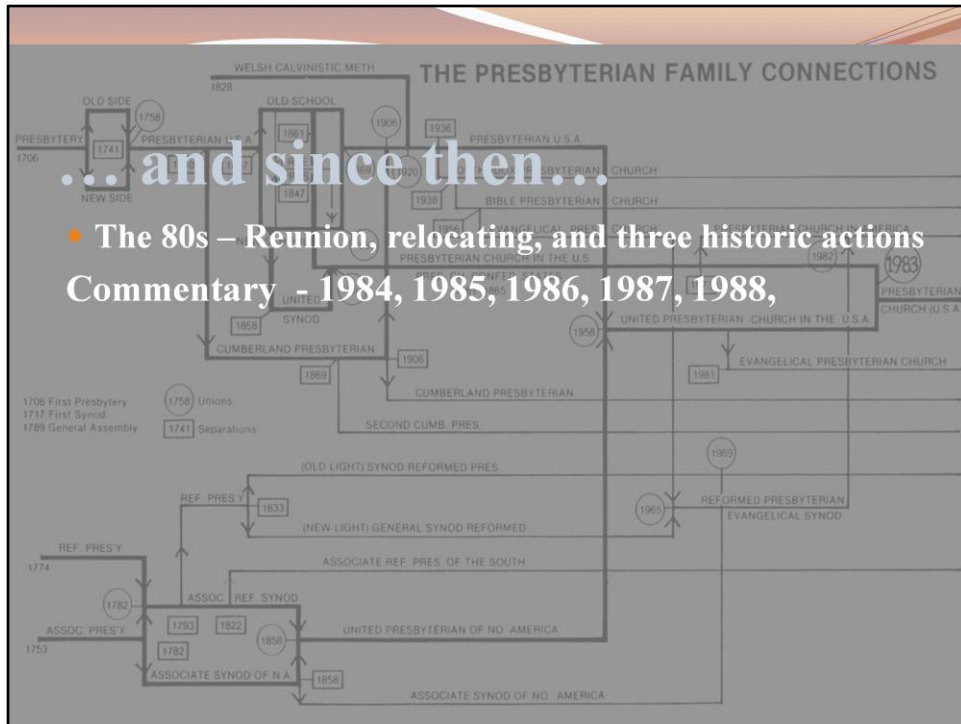




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1987 Elder Isabel Rogers of Richmond, VA, is elected moderator.

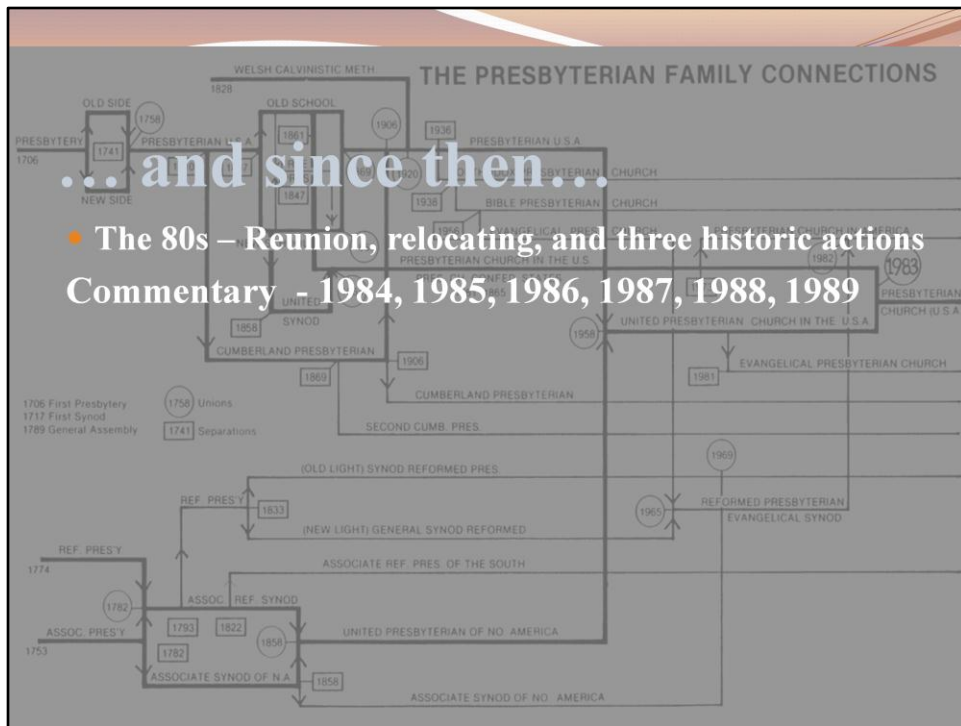
- Elder S. David Stoner is elected to a four-year term as executive director of the General Assembly Council.
- Louisville, KY selected as site for new national offices of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as commissioners reject a site selection committee's recommendation that the offices be located in Kansas City, MO.



...

1988 The Rev. C. Kenneth Hall of Beaver, PA, is elected moderator.

- The Rev. James E. Andrews is reelected to a second four-year term as stated clerk of the General Assembly.
- A year-long celebration of the Bicentennial of the Presbyterian Church in this country begins.
- Relocation of national offices to Louisville from Atlanta (PCUS) and New York (UPCUSA) is completed.



- Commentary - 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989**

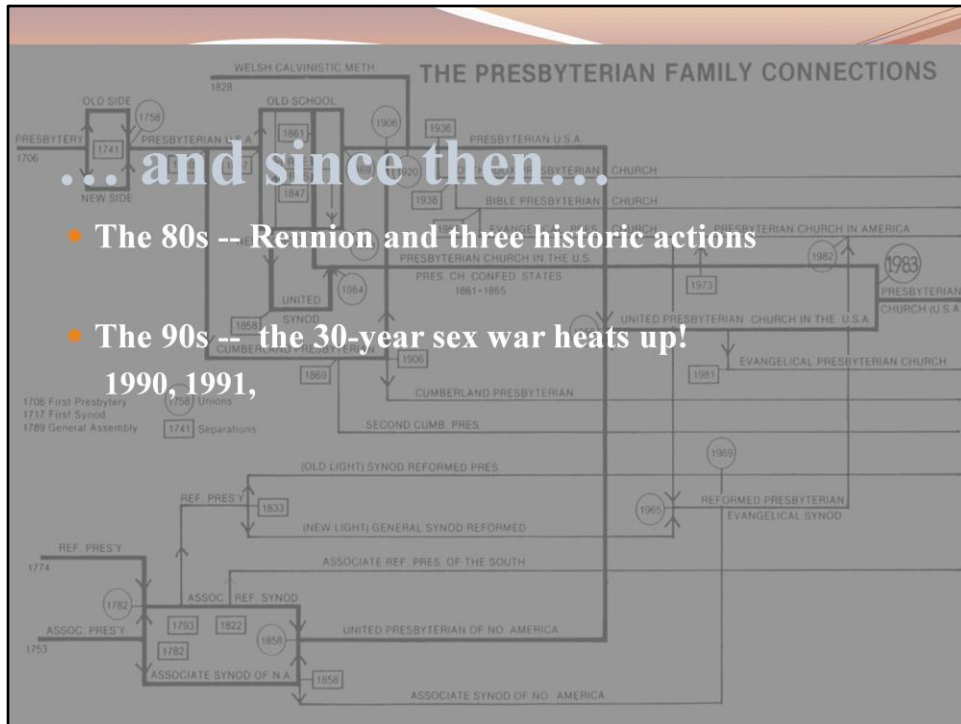
# Commentary - 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989

...

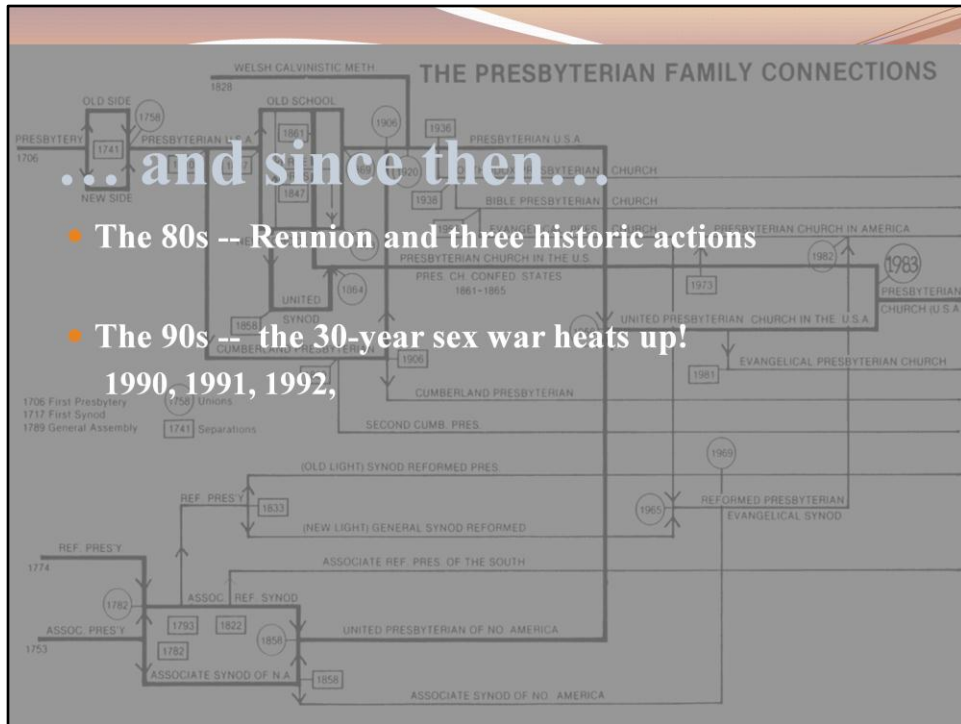
1989 The Rev. Joan Salmon Campbell of Philadelphia is elected moderator.

- Meeting in Philadelphia, site of the first General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church (USA) celebrates its bicentennial.





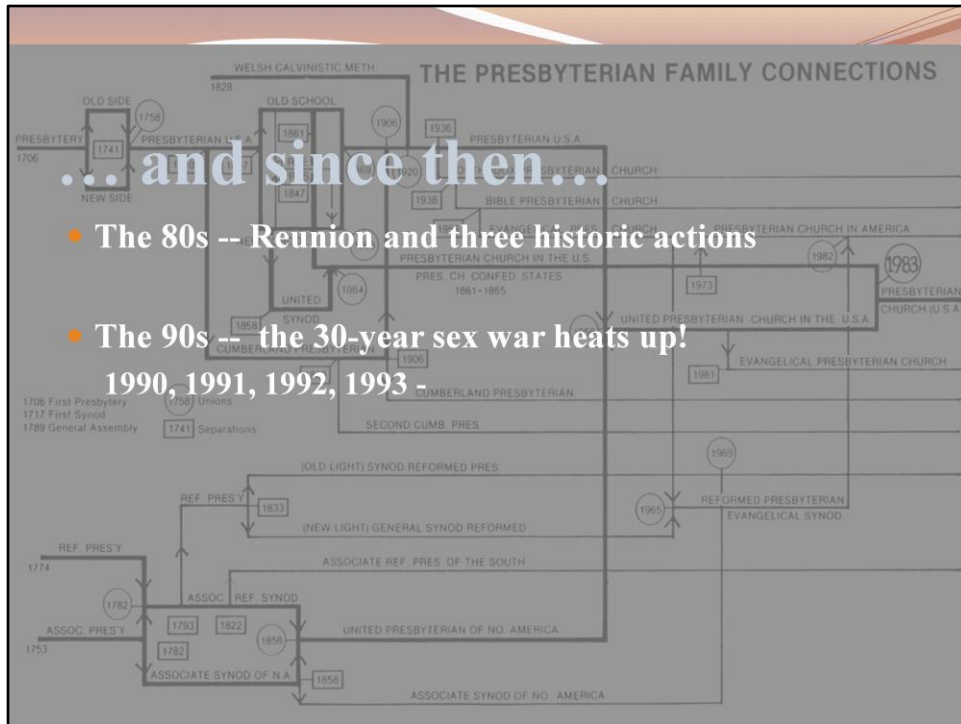




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1992 The Rev. John Fife of Tucson, AZ, is elected moderator.

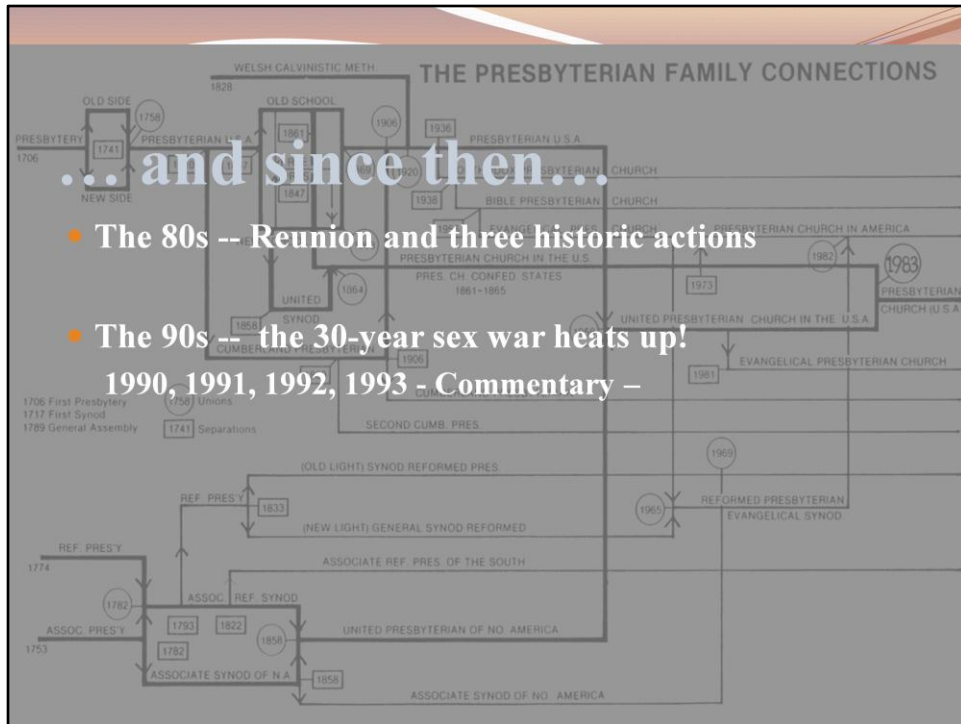
- The Rev. James D. Brown is elected to a four year term as executive director of the General Assembly Council after S. David Stoner declines to seek a second term.



...

1993 The Rev. David L. Dobler of Anchorage, AK, is elected moderator.

- An Organization for Mission to replace the Structural Design for Mission is approved,
- A restructuring of the General Assembly brought on by budget shortfalls and staff reductions.
- A three-year moratorium on voting about issues related to human sexuality and the ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians to church office is declared and the church is urged to engage in study and dialogue about those issues.



...

### Commentary: Assessment in time of crisis

The General Assembly directed that the section titled "Nature of the Church" of the final report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Church and the Practice of Governance be published and distributed to all congregations. The report begins with an assessment of our denomination's current situation and contains fifty statements that explore the biblical nature of the church, examine the Reformed tradition, consider the history of the church in North America, inspect the confessions, and search its polity. It begins:

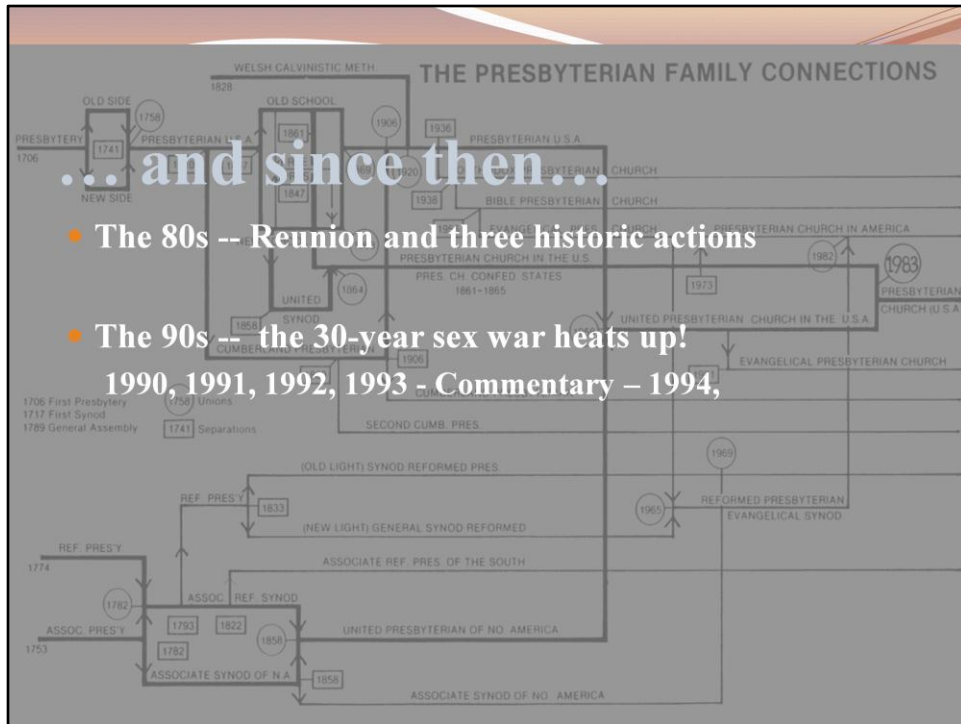
A painful truth is that in spite of significant accomplishments in these first ten years of a reunited church, the denomination is fragmented and uncertain about its future.

...

A key question is: How does our history -- principles, hard-won theological positions, previous conflicts, leaders of the past -- inform us today?

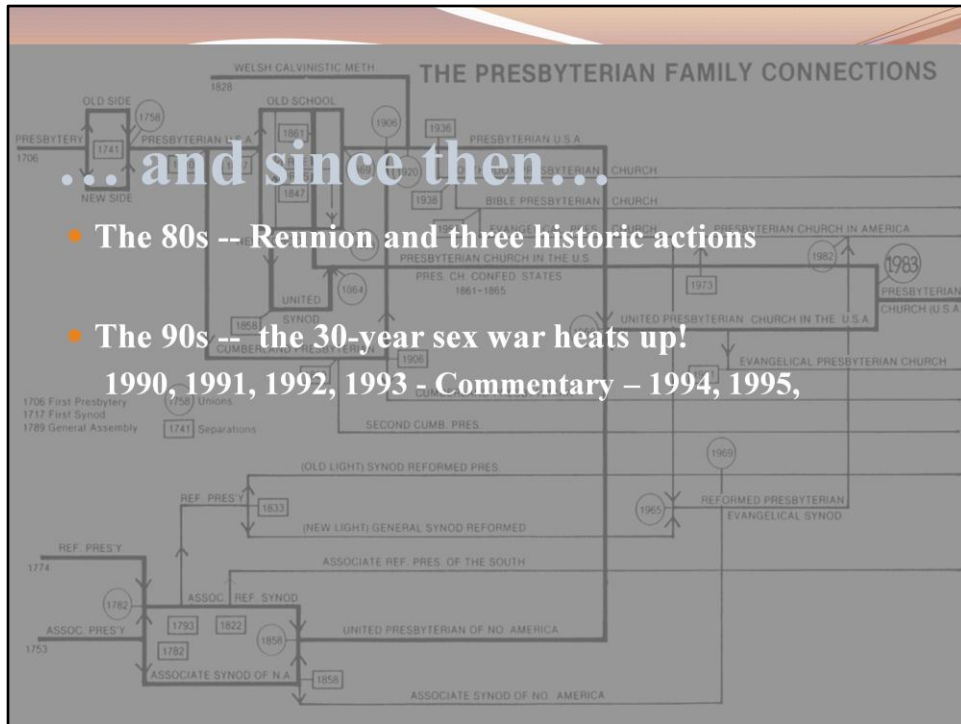
- In what way are we prepared to receive the lessons of history?
- How do these voices from the past inform us today?
- On the other hand, in what ways are we - and perhaps all Christian bodies - different denominations than we have ever been before, thus making the lessons of Presbyterian history less applicable?

And the church continues to struggle with these today – eh?



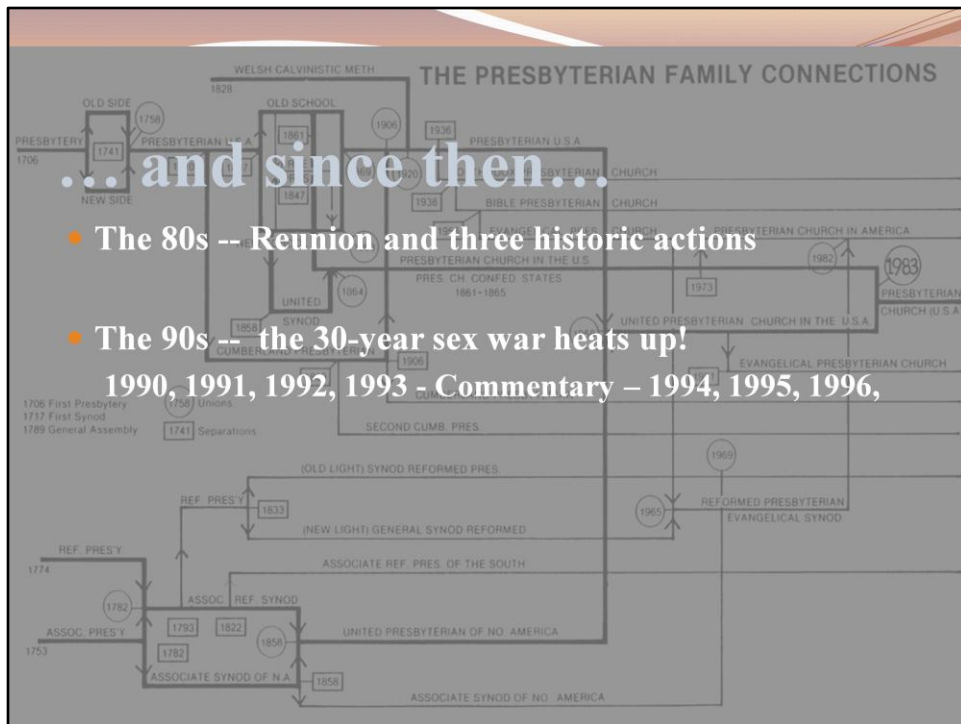
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1994 The Rev. Robert W. Bohl of Forth Worth, TX, is elected moderator.



...

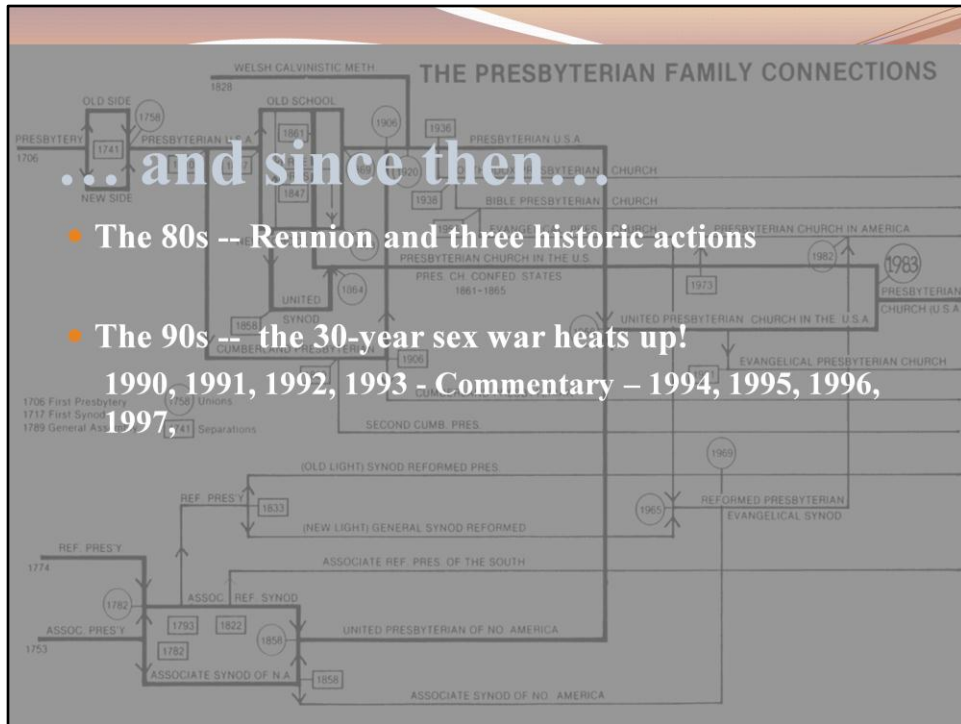
1995 Elder Marj Carpenter of Big Spring, TX, is elected moderator.



...

1996 The Rev. John M. Buchanan of Chicago is elected moderator.

- The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, former director of the Worldwide Ministries Division, is elected to a four-year term as General Assembly stated clerk, succeeding the Rev. James E. Andrews, who retired. As with his predecessor, – with subsequent re-elections, Kirkpatrick will serve for 12 years, nearly another half of the denomination’s life.
- The assembly refuses to confirm the Rev. James D. Brown for a second four-year term as executive director of the General Assembly Council. A search committee is elected by the Council to find a successor.
- Amendment B — the commonly called “fidelity and chastity” amendment — requiring “fidelity within the covenant of marriage of a man and a woman or chastity in singleness,” is approved by the assembly and submitted to the presbyteries for ratification.



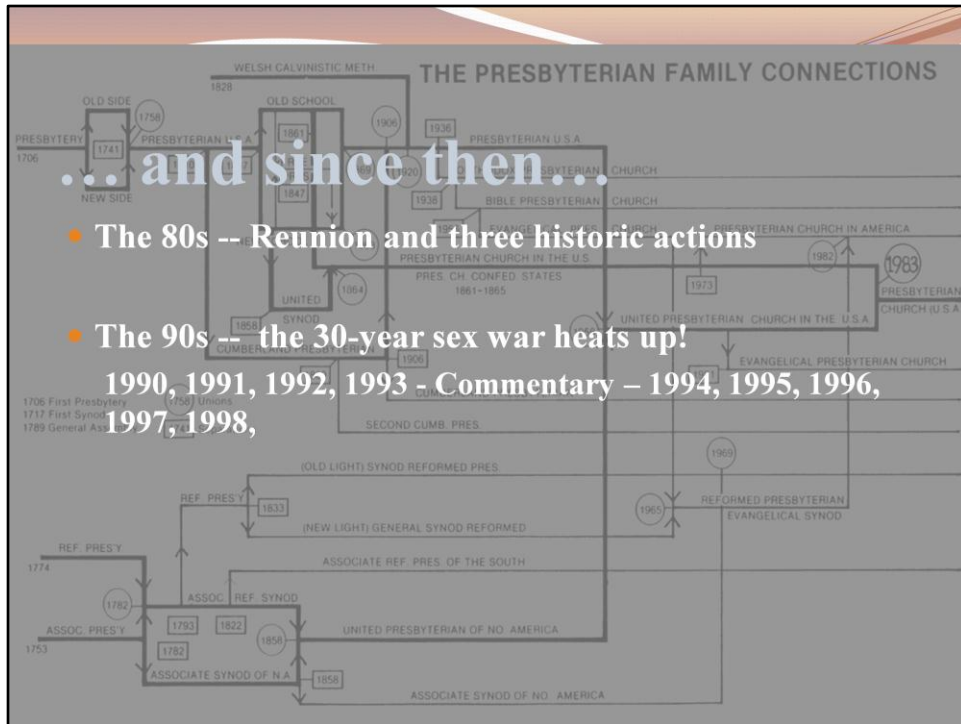
- **The 80s -- Reunion and three historic actions**
  - **The 90s -- the 30-year sex war heats up!**
- 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 - Commentary – 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997**

...

1997 Elder Patricia G. Brown of Cincinnati is elected moderator.

- “A Formula for Agreement” establishing full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America is approved and sent to the presbyteries for ratification.
- Amendment A, the commonly called “fidelity and integrity” amendment requiring “fidelity and integrity in marriage or singleness” rather than “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness” (the constitutional language of the now-ratified Amendment B), is approved by the assembly and submitted to the presbyteries for ratification.



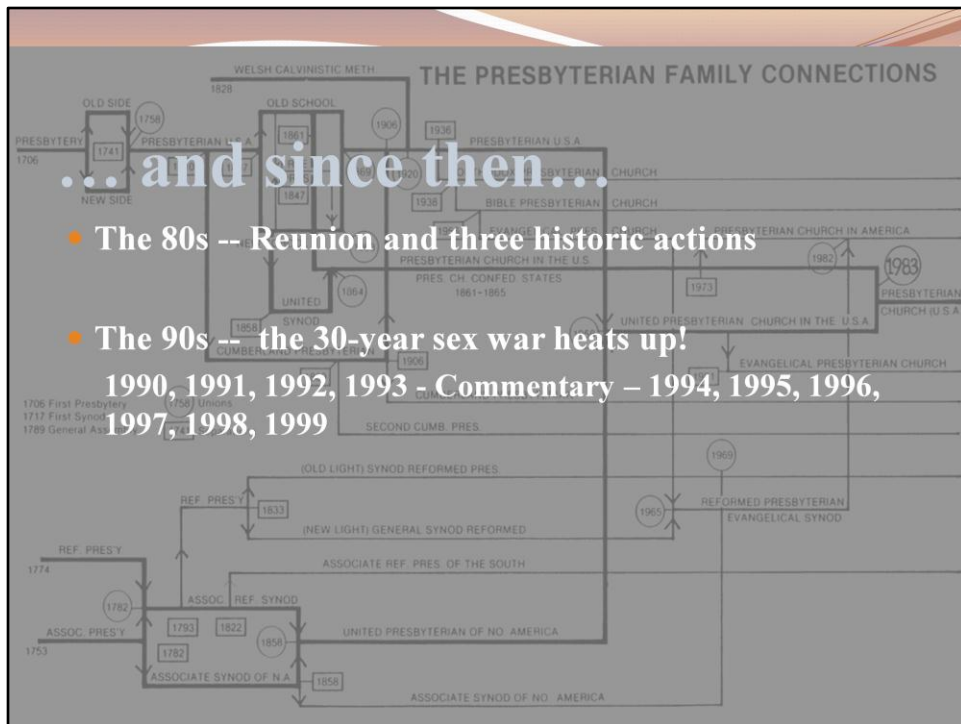


- **The 80s -- Reunion and three historic actions**
  - **The 90s -- the 30-year sex war heats up!**
- 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 - Commentary – 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998,**

...

1998 The Rev. Douglas W. Oldenburg of Decatur, GA, is elected moderator.

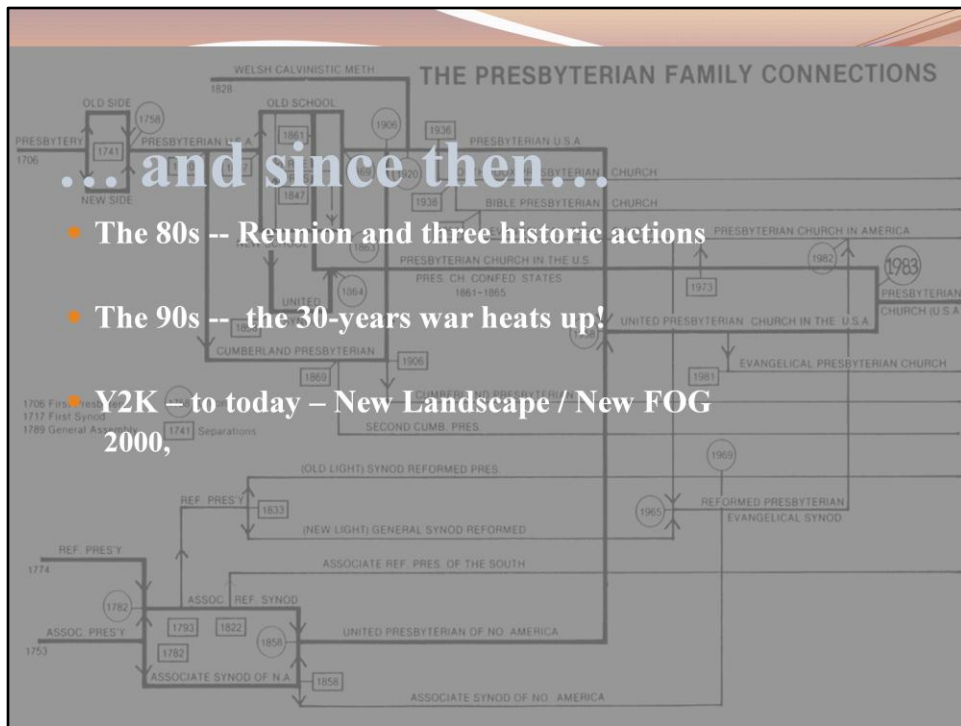
- Elder John J. Detterick, president of the Board of Pensions, is unanimously elected to a four-year term as executive director of the General Assembly Council.
- Amendment A is declared lost by a more than 2-1 margin in voting by the presbyteries. An informal sabbatical on further amendments on sexual standards for ordination is called for by a broad range of church leaders and the assembly goes along by not approving any such amendments.
- Major papers on church growth strategy and racism are adopted.



...

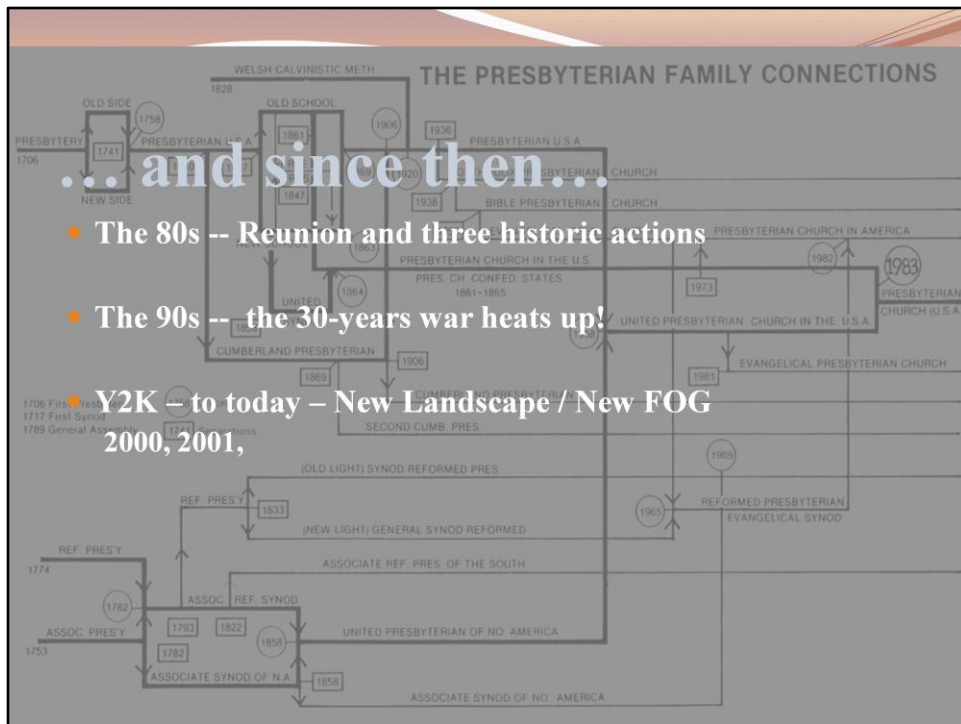
1999 Elder Freda M. Gardner of Princeton, NJ, is elected moderator.

- "Churches Uniting in Christ," the latest COCU proposal, is adopted. This changes much of our denominational stance and participation in ecumenism, and spells the end of COCU (more about this later).
- Major papers on church growth strategy and racism are adopted.



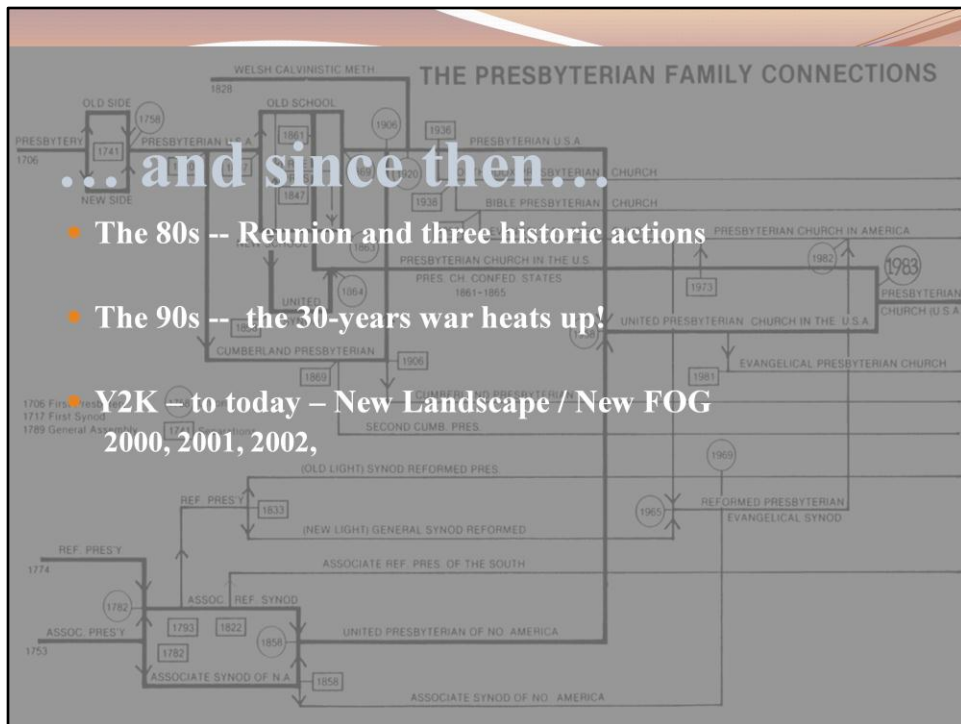
2000 The Rev. Syngman Rhee of Richmond, VA, is elected moderator — the first moderator of Asian descent.

- Amendment O — which would specifically prohibit same-sex unions in the Presbyterian Church (USA) — is narrowly approved and sent to the 173 presbyteries for their vote (the proposed amendment was subsequently rejected).
- By an overwhelming margin, the assembly defeats an overture that would have declared an “irreconcilable impasse” in the denomination over such issues as Biblical authority and interpretation, Jesus Christ and salvation, ethics, leadership, sanctification and the nature of the church.



2001 Rev. Jack Rogers of Pasadena, CA, is elected moderator.

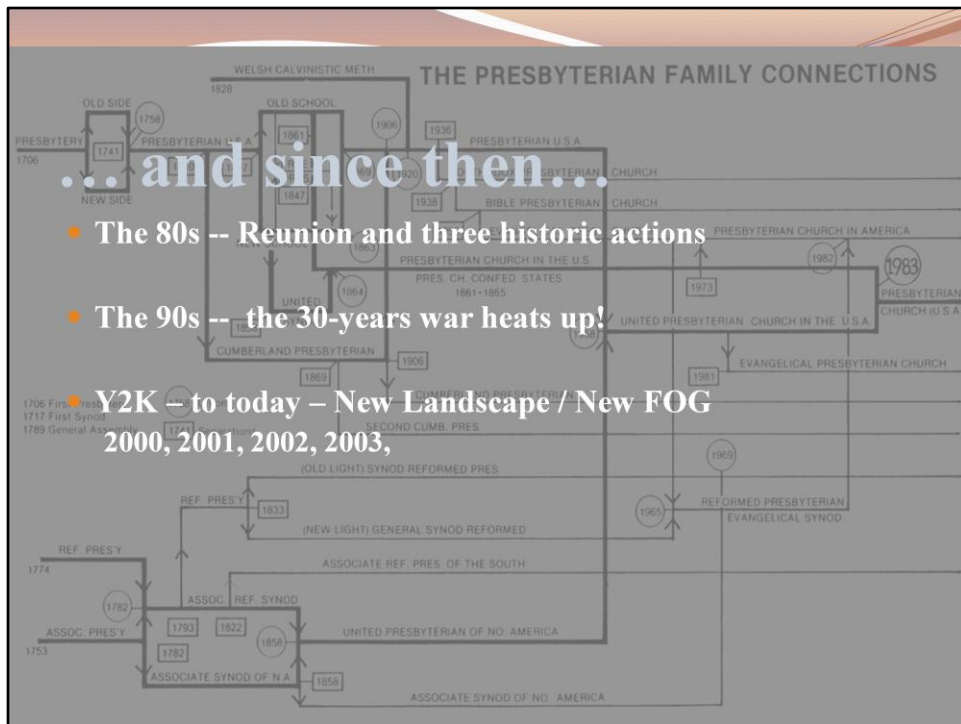
- By a 60-40% margin, the assembly sends a proposed amendment to the presbyteries that would delete G-6.0106b (the commonly called “fidelity and chastity” provision) from the Book of Order (the amendment is subsequently defeated).
- The assembly creates a Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church to find a way out of the theological disputes wracking the denomination. It is given four years to do its work – they took five.



...

2002 The Rev. Fahed Abu-Akel, of Atlanta, is elected moderator, the first moderator of Arab descent.

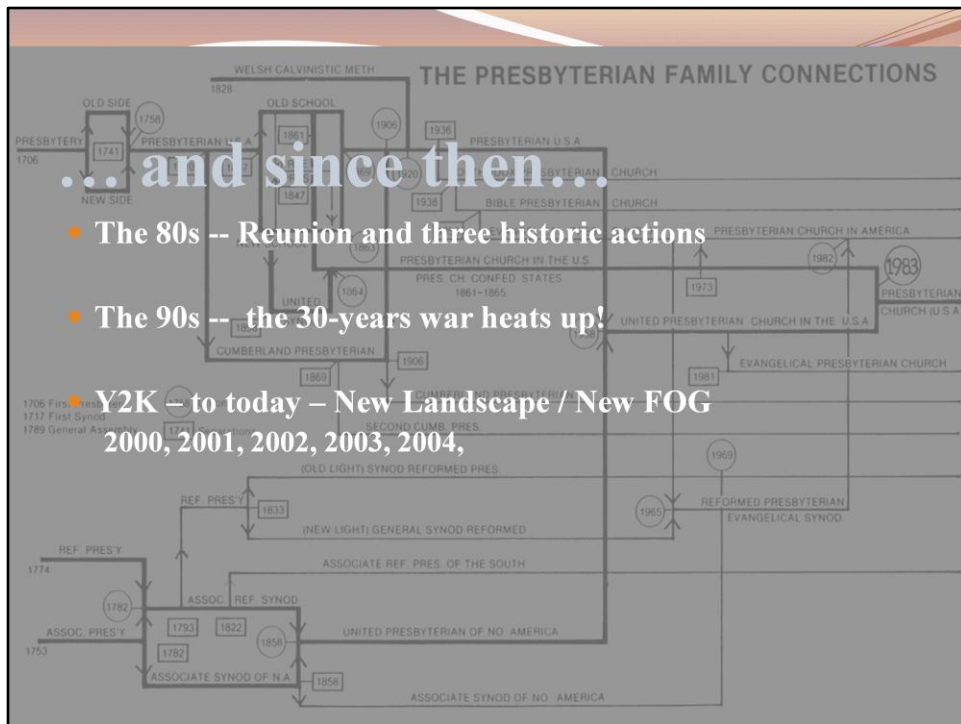
- The assembly votes to meet biennially in even-numbered years, beginning in 2004.
- The assembly adopts “Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ” by a vote of 497-11, resolving a two-year dispute over the denomination’s Christology.
- Elder John J. Dettterick is almost unanimously reelected to a second four-year term as executive director of the General Assembly Council.



...

2003 The Rev. Susan R. Andrews of Bethesda, MD, is elected moderator.

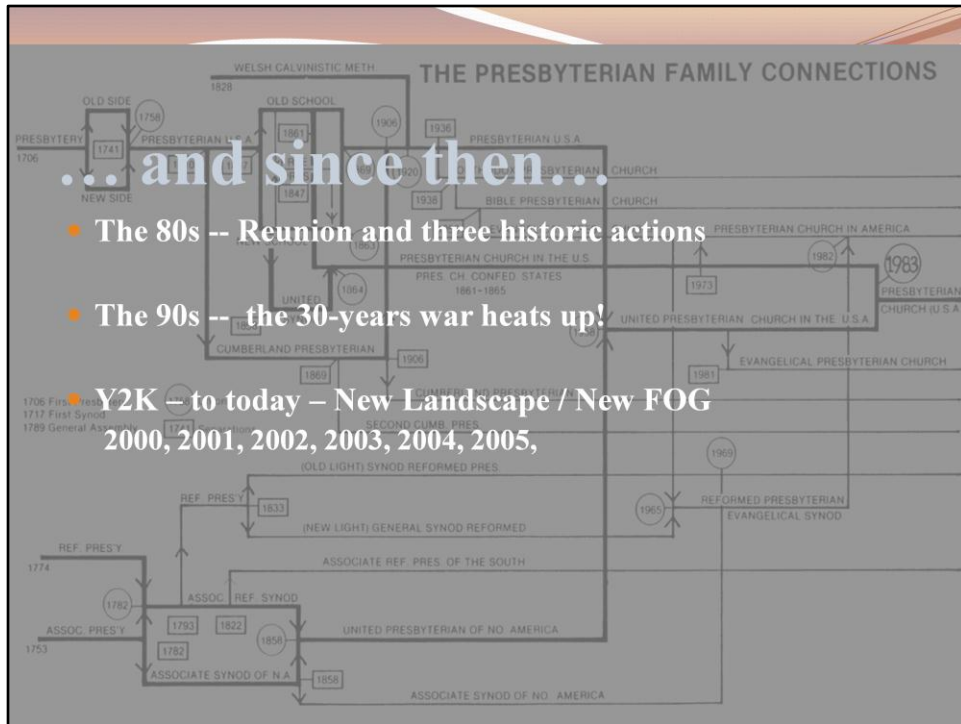
- The assembly reaffirms the previous year's decision to hold biennial meetings of the General Assembly.
- The assembly reaffirms the PC(USA)'s participation in the World Council of Churches.



...

2004 -- 216th GA, held in Richmond, Virginia.

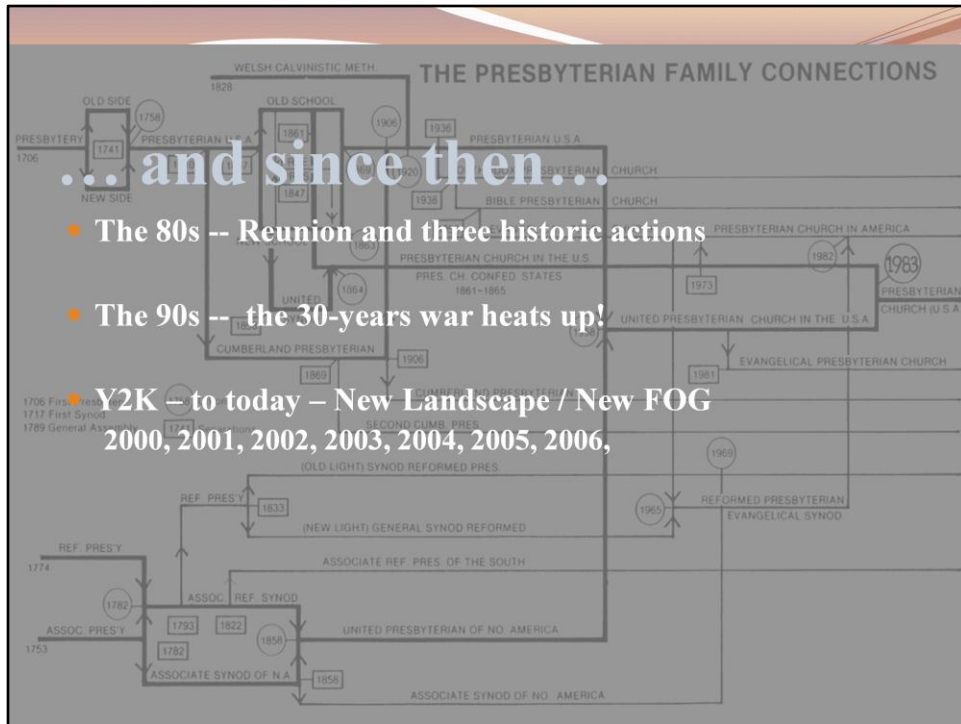
- Elder [Rick Ufford-Chase](#) elected Moderator, The Rev. [Jean Marie Peacock](#), Vice Moderator.
- At the General Assembly of 2004 an overture to consider adoption of the [Belhar Confession](#) was adopted. That confession was written by the [Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa](#) in response to [apartheid](#).



...

2005 The first "off-year" for GA.





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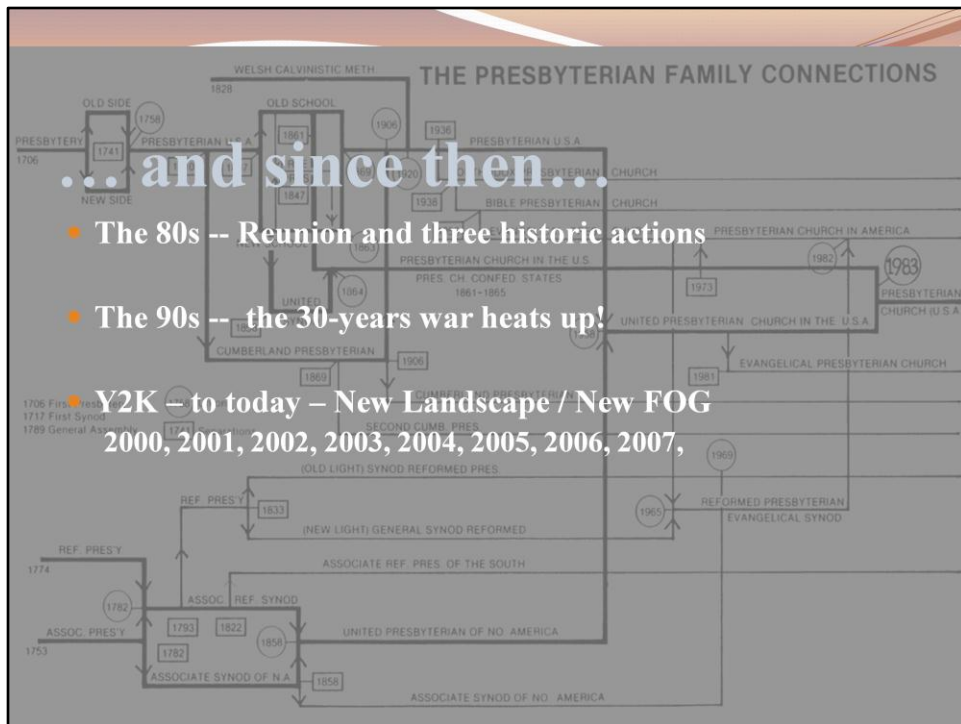
2006 -- 217th GA, held in Birmingham, Alabama

- The Rev. [Joan Gray](#) elected Moderator, Elder [Robert Wilson](#) Vice Moderator.
- The 2006 *Report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church*, in theory, attempted to find common ground. Some felt that the adoption of this report provided for a clear local option authority on ordination standards, while the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Clifton Kirkpatrick went on record as saying, "Our standards have not changed. The rules of the Book of Order stay in force and all ordinations are still subject to review by higher governing bodies." The authors of the report stated that it is a compromise and return to the original Presbyterian culture of local controls. The recommendation for more control by local presbyteries and sessions is viewed by its opposition as a method for bypassing the constitutional restrictions currently in place concerning ordination and marriage, effectively making the constitutional "standard" entirely subjective.
- The Commissioners passed an "authoritative interpretation" of the *Book of Order*, recommended by the Theological Task Force. Some argued that this interpretation gave presbyteries the "local option" of ordaining or not ordaining anyone based on a particular presbytery's reading of the constitutional statute. Others argued that presbyteries have always had this

responsibility and that this new ruling did not change but only clarified that responsibility. On June 20, 2006, the General Assembly voted 298 to 221 (or 57% to 43%) to approve such interpretation.

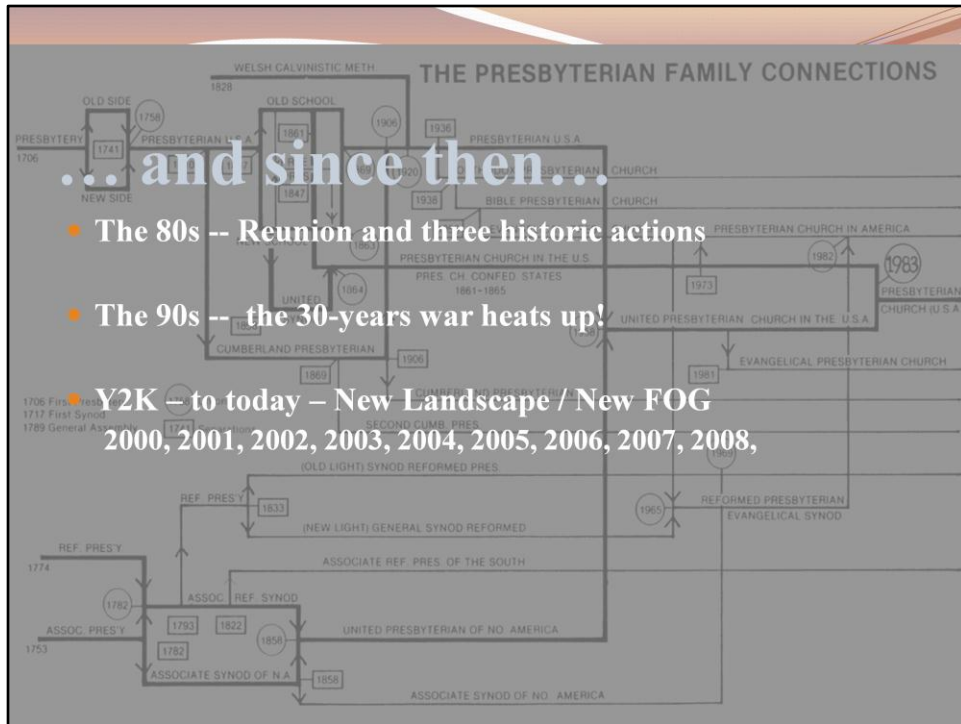
- In the same session on June 20, the General Assembly also voted 405 to 92 (with 4 abstentions) to uphold the constitutional standard for ordination requiring fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness.

A clear understanding of the effect of what the General Assembly voted upon in 2006 has had to await ecclesiastical court decisions on specific cases – and they are unwinding as we speak!



...

2007 The second "off-year" for GA.



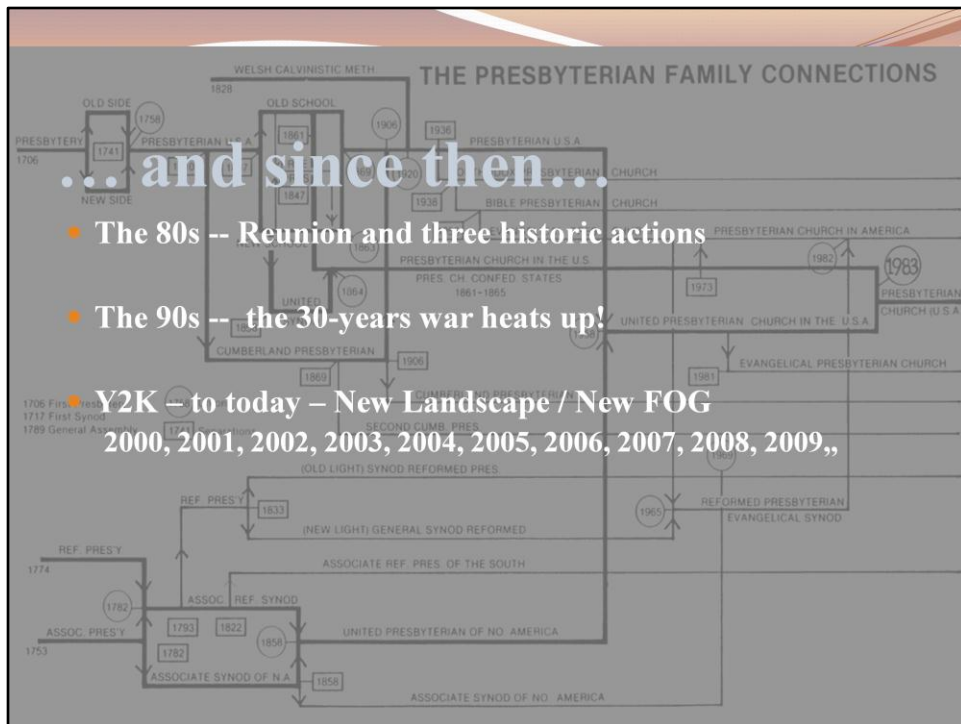
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2008 – the 218th GA, meeting in San José, California

- The Rev. [Bruce Reyes-Chow](#) is elected Moderator, and The Rev. [Byron Wade](#), Vice Moderator.
- Rev Gradye Parsons is elected Stated Clerk, succeeding Clifton Kirkpatrick's 12 year run.
- General Assembly voted to create a committee to study the [Belhar Confession](#) and bring a recommendation to the 2010 General Assembly. This is the first step in the PC(USA) process of changing the [Book of Confessions](#), a process that would require approval at General Assemblies in 2010 and 2012 and approval of the presbyteries within a year of the end of the 2010 Assembly.
- General Assembly took several actions related to homosexuality:
  - **The first action** was to adopt a **different translation** of the [Heidelberg Catechism](#) from 1962, removing the words "homosexual perversions" among other changes. As with the Confession of Belhar, this would require the approval of the 2010 and 2012 General Assemblies as well as the votes of the presbyteries within a year of the end of the 2010 Assembly.
  - **The second action** was to approve a new **Authoritative Interpretation** of G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order* allowing for the

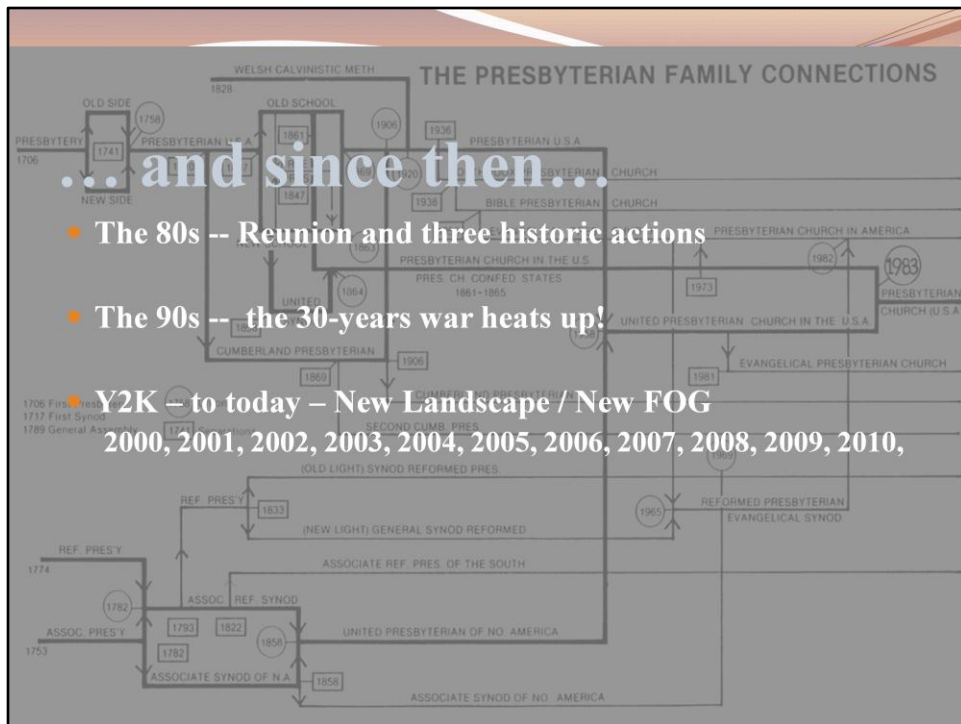
ordaining body to make decisions on whether or not a departure from the standards of belief or practice is sufficient to preclude ordination. Some would argue that this creates "local option" on ordaining homosexual persons.

- **The third action** was to replace the text of "**Amendment B**" with new text: "Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate's sincere efforts to adhere to these standards." This would have removed the "fidelity and chastity" clause. This third action failed to obtain the required approval of a majority of the presbyteries by June, 2009.
- And **the fourth action** – continuing its consistency of inconsistency, a resolution was adopted to **affirm the definition of marriage** from Scripture and the Confessions as being between a man and a woman.



...

2009 The third "off-year" for GA.



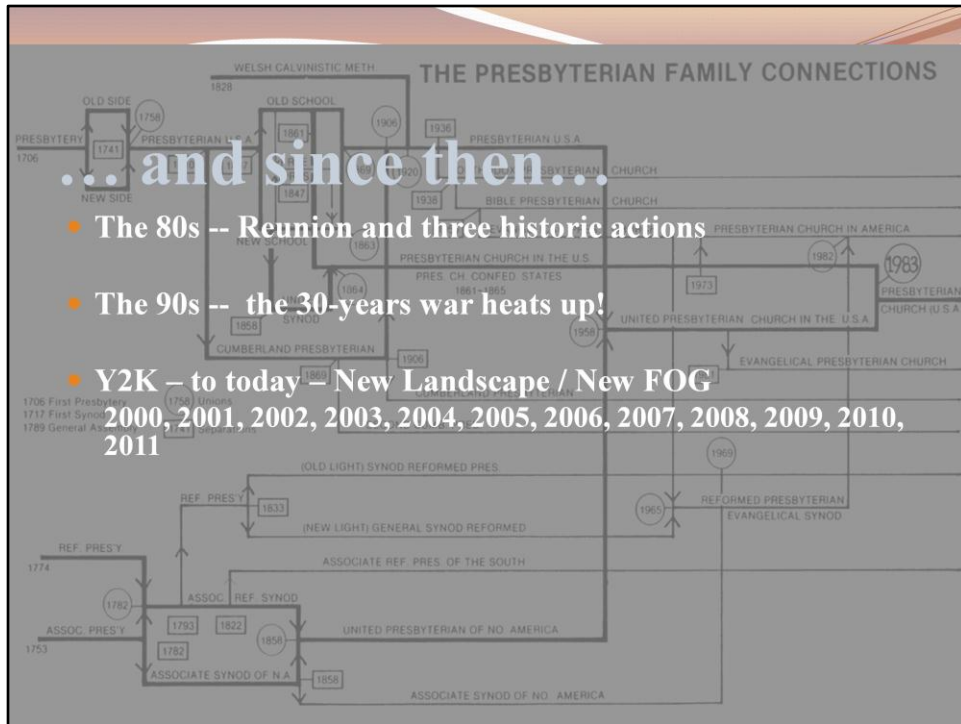
...

2010 – the 219th GA, meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

- Elder [Cynthia Bolbach](#) was elected Moderator of the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and The Rev. Landon Whitsitt was elected Vice Moderator. Rev Gradye Parsons continues as Stated Clerk.
- GA receives the report of the newFOG Task Force and votes to send its proposed sweeping revision of the Form of Government to the presbyteries for their approval -- as Part 1 of a package of 17 amendments to the Constitution requiring only a simple majority of the presbyteries approval to be come effective.
- GA approves and forwards the [Belhar Confession](#) to the presbyteries for their approval as part 2 of the package – this part requiring a 2/3 affirmation from them – and a subsequent approval at General Assembly of 2012.
- By a vote of 373 to 323, the GA sends to the presbyteries a constitutional amendment to remove the restriction against the ordination of partnered homosexuals. This action – along with the other 14 specific paragraph amendments of the package’s Part 3 each of which would (again) required ratification by a simple majority of the 173 presbyteries within 12 months for the proposed amendment to take effect.
- The assembly reaffirms the PC(USA)’s commitment to and engagement in

Africa.





...

2011 Presbyteries pass all of the Book of Order changes proposed in parts 1 and 3 of GA's package – but not part 2 (Confession of Belhar) –

... and here we are today!



– and here we are today. Want to relive this history? I hope that we paid attention.

Now, let's turn now to the work of today's PCUSA – not in terms of the usual action ministries like hunger, ecology, foreign missions and the like. You can find these in abundance on the Pacific Mission Exchange website ([www.pmx.org](http://www.pmx.org)) and participate in them as you are led.

I want to address some more subtle ministries of our church:

## PC(USA) in action

- **Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy**

- [http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm\\$?templates\\$vid=pedocs.10.1048/Enu](http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm$?templates$vid=pedocs.10.1048/Enu)



- Christian principles apply to all social, moral, economic, national and international relationships
- Warning and protecting the church from the world
- Research and deliberation on understanding and changing the world
- Prophetic role: speaks to the church – not for the church

The **Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy** has been part of the Northern strand since 1936, when the General Assembly approved the Report of the Committee of Five. The resulting Department of Social Education and Action (SEA) has had numerous revisions but has remained part of the GA structure ever since.

The Social Education and Action mandate is: “that the Presbyterian Church is under obligation to show how... Christian principles apply to all social, moral, economic, national and international relationships....” This includes “recommending to the General Assembly declarations of principles ...and the means to be taken by our Church to make the Christian Gospel more effective...” A pre-1936 theme of warning and protecting the church from the world is still present, now combined with more research and deliberation on understanding and changing the world.

Biblically, the model for church social witness agencies lies in the prophetic vocation. Unlike in Islam, where the prophet became the ruler, in Judaism and Christianity the prophet remains separate from the ruler. Practically speaking, the “prophetic” function in organized church life does not “rule;” it advises. Thus, this body speaks up for the Church’s appropriate distance from the powers of state and culture – and rightly has itself some appropriate distance from control by the action powers in the Church.

Similar processes of expanding and then contracting the resources for social concerns

have gone on in most mainline Protestant churches, though our body of Christian social ethical teaching is (humbly stated) the most careful and comprehensive. It is both accessible and searchable on the web at:

[http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm\\$fn=templates\\$vid=pcdocs:10.1048/Enu](http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm$fn=templates$vid=pcdocs:10.1048/Enu)

and is a file called the “Social Witness Policy Compilation” on the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy’s web page.

**Time to take notes: Write down this URL – or just Google “PCUSA Social Witness Policy Compilation.”**

Both Methodists and United Church of Christ have more autonomous social witness units, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has a larger office, but almost all denominations have some orderly way to include the “prophetic” function in their organizations.

We believe that **the Holy Spirit speaks directly to every Christian conscience**, but part of the church’s “ministerial and declarative” voice has been seen to consist of ethical guidance, free enough to help reform the church under the guidance of the Word of God.

The Church is called to be an example to the world in its internal workings. General Assembly social policy repeatedly emphasizes democracy, the free conscience of the individual Christian, the rule of law and the independence of the Church to serve its Lord, “rather than men” (Acts 5:29). In no case in Presbyterian polity is unconditional authority given to any one person or body; authority, like wisdom, grows in democratic process; good witness begins in free internal dialogue. We believe that mutual accountability is at the core of Presbyterian ministry.

How does your church speak out on social issues?

# PC(USA) in action

- Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy

Ministry in the **prophetic role**

- Nevada Presbytery Social Witness – Evident from its history



- Ministry outside of the church
- Ministry to the world
- Ministry through women of the church
- Ministry to the civic needs of the community
- Ministry to the federal, state, and local government

Here in Nevada, we have a long history of social witness – stretching from the late 1860s:

## **Ministry outside of the church**

- Beginning with funerals for well-known prostitutes, vigilantism, and lectures on women's rights in the precedent of our Virginia City Church (our second-oldest organized church, which survived the Great Fire of 1895 largely due to the saloon keepers, prostitutes and drunks who manned the bucket brigade because they regarded it as their church),
- to capturing nearly all of Pioche's children in its Sunday school in the 1870s,
- to the 1906 Rhyolite Sunday School children's collection of toys for "unfortunate children elsewhere"
- and to that church and its pastor's attitude toward and treatment of prostitutes as "young girls trapped in a pitiful life on Aramogoso street, drawn by the glamor ... and left victim to squalid conditions" (their greater prejudice directed to the "creature in human form who traffics in women's virtues and lives off the earnings of fallen women") – a theme played out in the Presbytery wide call to defend against Human Trafficking through our churches and through the legislature today.

## **Ministry to the world**

- By sending a delegate (the Reverend Moderator, JM Swander) to a world

ecumenical event in 1913.

### **Ministry through women of the church**

- Beginning with the 1892 formation of the Ladies Aid Society in the Elko church – followed by many others – leading to the Presbytery-wide (1909) and church wide formation of the Presbyterian Women and their care work,
- to women as Sunday School Board presidents and Trustees as early as 1906,
- ... and to supporting an overture to GA on ordination of women as elders in 1921 (not enacted by GA and the presbyteries until 1930) and acting on that freedom shortly after.

### **Ministry to the civic needs of the community**

- Beginning with successfully leading the opposition of water rights grabs by the City of Los Angeles by our Bishop church in 1929 - mid-1930s,
- To formalized schooling and mission works among the Indians within the bounds of Presbytery – resulting in two Indian churches , Valley Bishop and Owyhee (the latter was the missionary and preaching home of Rousas Rushdooney (later in life a Calvinist philosopher, historian, and theologian and is widely credited as the father of Christian Reconstructionism and an inspiration for the modern Christian homeschool movement. His followers and critics have argued that his thought exerts considerable influence on today's Christian right),
- To support for the Anti-saloon league made in the year of Presbytery's incorporation, 1909 and voting support to the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution on Prohibition in 1917, opposing gambling in the 1930s and MX missile basing in Nevada in the 1960s.

### **Ministry to the Federal and State government**

- With direct political intervention as early as 1911 regarding nuns wearing their habits in Indian schools, in 1922 regarding a residential requirement preceding civil divorce, provisions of religious services at Indian schools in 1933, was commended by a district judge for taking important stands on “matters of importance” over the years, passed a Nevada legislative agenda in 1963 (equal rights, opposition to the death penalty,
- addition of chaplains to the prison system – one of our pastors being long in this position, adding a state park system,
- directly lobbied the state legislature to support the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution in 1972,
- ... leading to joining with four other mainline denominational judicatories in Nevada to form the Religious Alliance In Nevada as a Christian lobby to the

legislature on social concerns in 1996.

How has your Presbytery spoken out?

## PC(USA) in action

- **Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy**

- [http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm\\$?templates\\$vid=pedocs.10.1048/Enu](http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm$?templates$vid=pedocs.10.1048/Enu)
- Nevada Presbytery History
- **Religious Alliance In Nevada (RAIN)** – [www.RAINnv.org](http://www.RAINnv.org)



Address social justice with the state legislature and the public:

Children and Family  
Health Care  
Criminal Justice  
Funding Social Programs  
Other

Nevada Presbytery today acts with the four other mainline church dioceses, synods, and districts that cover our state – the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Methodist Church, the Episcopal church, and the Evangelical Lutheran church -- through the ...

**Religious Alliance in Nevada (RAIN)** which provides a forum for cooperative effort among communities of faith in Nevada as we seek to address and advocate for social justice at the state legislature and in the public arena, on those issues upon which there is common agreement of RAIN members. RAIN advocates on bills pertaining to:

### Children and Family Issues:

Adequate funding of social programs for basic services to families in need  
Children requiring protective services and foster care  
Health care for needy, uninsured children and their families  
Affordable, available, accessible housing for all who need it  
Economic security and jobs with wages that can support families

### Criminal Justice Issues:

Progressive correctional efforts and reentry programs that work  
Fair and just sentencing



Opposition to the death penalty  
Juvenile justice and specialty courts (i.e. for the mentally ill, drug offenders, and homeless)

Health Care Issues:

Affordable and accessible health care for all  
Health insurance reform that protects the vulnerable among us who need coverage  
Mental Health access to care

Funding Social Programs:

A fair, reliable & stable tax system --  
Sufficient revenue to meet society's basic needs & to support desirable economic development fair to all

Other Concerns:

Environmental protection efforts  
Issues of social justice and human dignity—i.e. homelessness, access to services, full participation in democratic institutions of government

I happen to be one of the two delegates to RAIN from our presbytery. Do you have a similar organization in your state? Is your church involved in it?

## PC(USA) in action

- Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy
- The “Washington Office” PCUSA
  - Over 60 Years ...
  - What Does Scripture Say About Justice?



Christ speaks of the accountability of nations to do justice in Matthew 25: *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."*

The Presbyterian Office of Public Witness is the public policy information and advocacy office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Its task is to advocate, and help the church to advocate, the social witness perspectives and policies of the Presbyterian General Assembly. The church has a long history of applying these biblically and theologically-based insights to issues that affect the public — maintaining a public policy ministry in the nation's capital since 1946.

Reformed theology teaches that because a sovereign God is at work in all the world, the church and Christian citizens should be concerned about public policy. In addition, Presbyterian forefather John Calvin wrote, "Civil magistracy is a calling not only holy and legitimate, but by far the most sacred and honorable in human life."

### **Over 60 Years ...**

In 1936, the former United Presbyterian Church in the USA developed the Department of Social Education and Action. Presbyterians have always been known as political advocates; however this new Department created the first organized national effort.

### **What Does Scripture Say About Justice?**

Throughout the Bible, scripture reveals God's will to do justice. The Hebrew prophets continually remind God's people "...What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). The

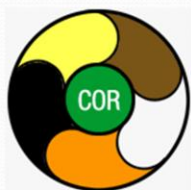
prophets give specific warning to those who seek only their own well-being and ignore the well-being of the marginalized and oppressed. Israel's failure to be just and righteous is clearly seen as disobedient to God and the reason for national decay and destruction.

Jesus frequently witnessed to the priority of the poor in the reign of God. He challenged the rich young ruler, he sharply criticized the hard-heartedness of religious leaders, and he taught that those who reached out to marginalized persons were serving him (Luke 18:18-25, Matthew 19:16-24 and Luke 10:25-37). In addition, Christ speaks of the accountability of nations to do justice in Matthew 25 and states, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

The Washington Office is open to your church members visiting the Nation's capitol – drop in!

## PC(USA) in action

- Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy
- The ‘Washington Office’
- Constitutional Committees on Representation



“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.”  
(*Book of Order*, F-1.0403).

The 1983 reunion of the Presbyterian Church continued and reinforced the antecedents’ **committees on representation**. The new denomination made a strong commitment to the principles of participation and inclusiveness to ensure effective representation in the decision making of the church on the part of persons of all backgrounds. Article 8 of the Articles of Agreement not only committed the new church to the principles of participation, inclusiveness, and fair representation in the decision making of the church, but also mandated the creation of committees of representation (CORs) at all governing bodies above the session.

The councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church’s membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices (F-1.0403). In fulfilling this commitment, councils shall give due consideration to both the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-2.0104) and the right of people in congregations and councils to elect their officers (F-3.0106).

The COR in each council (above Session) is encouraged to study/review the patterns of participation and inclusiveness on committees, boards, and agencies in synods and presbyteries. Wherever possible, COR should consult with racial ethnic groups, women’s groups, persons with disabilities, etc. COR is expected to consult with the nominating committee and assist them in securing names of persons willing to serve on synod/presbytery committees, boards, and agencies. COR is encouraged to be in

contact with other committees of the synod/presbytery, i.e., evangelism, Christian education, etc., about ways in which persons can be recruited for training. COR members should participate as well.

### **Responsibilities of CORs**

A committee on representation (COR) in a synod or presbytery is a real asset to these governing bodies in assisting them in the development of workshops around key issues raised in the church, such as racism training, unity and diversity conferences, and better understanding of the diverse cultures within the PC(USA). These CORs are:

- encouraged to study/review the patterns of participation and inclusiveness on committees, boards, and agencies in synods and presbyteries. Wherever possible, COR should consult with racial ethnic groups, women's groups, persons with disabilities, etc.
- expected to consult with the nominating committee and assist them in securing names of persons willing to serve on synod/presbytery committees, boards, and agencies. ... and ...
- encouraged to be in contact with other committees of the synod/presbytery, i.e., evangelism, Christian education, etc., about ways in which persons can be recruited for training (In which COR members should participate, as well).

## PC(USA) in action

- Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy
  - [http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm\\$?templates\\$vid=pedocs.10.1048/Enu](http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm$?templates$vid=pedocs.10.1048/Enu)
  - Nevada Presbyterian History
  - RAIN – [www.RAINnv.org](http://www.RAINnv.org)
- The Washington Office
- Constitutional Committees on Representation
- World Ecumenical Action



***There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:4-6)***

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) believes that it is called to **seek unity with the whole body of Christ and all the people of God** -- to be Presbyterian is to be ecumenical. The PCUSA confesses our own brokenness and pledge to promote the quest for unity and reconciliation throughout our church and in the world.

With a history of leading ecumenical actions dating back to the pre-reunion days (seemingly the personal mission of the Stated Clerk Carson Blake and nearly every Stated Clerk since), The church has long been committed to "engage in bilateral and multilateral dialogues with other churches and traditions in order to remove barriers of misunderstanding and establish common affirmations." At the present time it is **in dialog** with the Episcopal Church, the Moravian Church, the Korean American Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. It also participates in international dialogues through the World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The most recent international dialogues include Pentecostal churches, Seventh-day Adventist, Orthodox Church in America, and others.

### **Formula of agreement**

In 1997 four churches of Reformation heritage acted on an ecumenical proposal of historic importance. The timing reflected a doctrinal consensus which had been developing over the past thirty-two years coupled with an increasing urgency for the church to proclaim a gospel of unity in contemporary society. These are the:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),
- Reformed Church in America, and
- United Church of Christ

... who declare on the basis of A Common Calling and their adoption of this Formula of Agreement that they are in full communion with one another. ***Thus, each church is entering into or affirming full communion with three other churches.***

The term “full communion” is understood here to specifically mean that these four churches:

- recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Word of God (remember this phrase);
- withdraw any historic condemnation by one side or the other as inappropriate for the life and faith of our churches today;
- continue to recognize each other’s Baptism and authorize and encourage the sharing of the Lord’s Supper among their members; recognize each others’ various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament;
- establish appropriate channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of the churches;
- commit themselves to an ongoing process of theological dialogue in order to clarify further the common understanding of the faith and foster its common expression in evangelism, witness, and service;
- pledge themselves to living together under the Gospel in such a way that the principle of mutual affirmation and admonition becomes the basis of a trusting relationship in which respect and love for the other will have a chance to grow.

The 209th General Assembly (1997) approved A Formula of Agreement and in 1998 the 210th General Assembly declared full communion among these Protestant bodies.

### **National and international ecumenical memberships**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in corresponding partnership with the National Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Christian Churches Together, and the World Council of Churches.

## **World Communion of Reformed Churches**

In June 2010, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches merged with the Reformed Ecumenical Council to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The result will be a form of full communion similar to that outline in the Formula of Agreement, including orderly exchange of ministers.

## **Churches Uniting in Christ**

The PC (U.S.A.) is one of nine denominations that joined together to form the Consultation on Church Union, which initially sought a merger of the denominations; however, the membership of these denominations overwhelmingly rejected a merger when it was proposed in 1969.

With the failure of the merger proposal, COCU then turned to negotiating "[full communion](#)", whereby each member church would retain its own autonomy and identity, while recognizing the validity of the rites and [ministry](#) of the others and accepting them as true churches. In 1991 it was proposed that this was to be done on the historic model of [bishop](#), [presbyter](#) and [deacon](#). However, the [Presbyterian Church USA](#) was unwilling to implement some of the changes to its internal rules that this model would require, and the [Episcopal Church](#) did not feel able to participate at the time. It was then proposed that [intercommunion](#) be established without a resolution of the ministry issue, which would be resolved by 2007 by means of intensive dialog between the churches. This modified proposal was then accepted by the member churches.

The **Churches Uniting in Christ** – the successor to the Consultation on Church Union - is not a merger, but rather an intercommunion agreement whereby each member recognizes the others as part of the true church, and recognizes its rites ([baptism](#), [communion](#)) as valid. The original proposal for CUIC also had a full recognition of each other's ministers, but the Episcopal Church's insistence on the [historic episcopate](#), which conflicts with the system of organization and governance in some other member churches (especially in the [Presbyterian Church USA](#) and the [United Church of Christ](#)), has meant that this part of the CUIC proposal has been put on hold. CUIC continues negotiations, possibly leading to a full recognition of each other's ministers over time.

The [African Methodist Episcopal Church](#) and [African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church](#) have withdrawn from CUIC, feeling that the other churches were not doing enough to counter the history of racial injustice between black and white churches. In response to this, the remaining churches in CUIC have decided to suspend its work while they seek reconciliation with those two churches.



**Full members**

[Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)

[Christian Methodist Episcopal Church](#)

[The Episcopal Church \(TEC\)](#)

[International Council of Community Churches](#)

[Moravian Church Northern Province](#)

[Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#)

[United Church of Christ](#)

[United Methodist Church](#)

**Former members**

[African Methodist Episcopal Church](#)

[African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church](#)

**Partners in mission and dialogue**

[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

# Overview

HIS story – in the Context of YOUR story

## **How did we get to wherever we are?**

- The Run-up to Reunion
- Where were we in '82?
- Then what happened?
- 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. *Lunch on your own*

What do we have here? -- and -- Who's Who in the Zoo?

Where are we going? -- and -- What does it mean to me?

The Final Exam

That brings us to two important junctures:

The end of the morning's presentations – and

Lunch.

## Overview 2

HIS story – in the Context of YOUR story

How did we get to wherever we are?

- The Run-up to Reunion – *the timeline*
- Where were we in '82?
- Then what happened?
- **11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** *Lunch on your own*
- **1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.**

Where are we now? -- and -- Who's Who in the Zoo?

Where are we going? -- and -- What does it mean to me?

The Final Exam

A quick review of our map for the last 75 minutes.

See you this afternoon – hope you get your offices back on track!