

Where Were You In '82?

3rd Sunday of 6

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.

Overview

- Peter's version of the run-up to 1982...
- Our Denomination's organizational history and its context
- **The “my” stories – Nevada's story – FPC's story**
- Who are all these people?
- And what do we believe ... now?
- Where are we going?

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

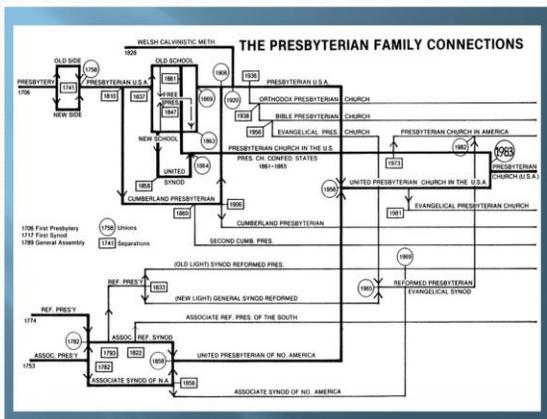
Since Peter Wilson and I have both given you the historical sweep of the history of our church – up to 1983 -- with all of the hard-to-pronounce names of people and places –

And again, since Tip O'Neil mused that “all politics is local” – just so all history is personal. Today we will try to make our church history - your story. I mean, really your story ...

Today we share, beginning with: “Where were you in '82?”

Last Sunday ...

- When you talk history -- its context, context, context!



... and the focus was:



The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has over 10,000 congregations which are organized into 173 presbyteries (district governing bodies) and 16 synods (regional governing bodies).

Today we will talk about our denomination – which is as old as my wife, 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 ...

... and we will talk about...

This Sunday ...

- About *your-story* ...
- About the *First Presbyterian Church's-story* ...
- About the *Nevada Presbytery-story* ...
- About the *Synod of the Pacific-story* ...
- ... and *Who* is *Who* in the denomination.

As Dr. Oz says on the teaser for his show, today, "... its all about you!"

Well ... and about a few others – as we look for God acting within your lives and within His church – in this congregation, our presbytery, our synod, and the General Assembly of our denomination.

To start us off ...

- **Arthur Ritter**, First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas
 - Macalester Presbyterian Church in St Paul, Minnesota when it was part of the Presbyterian Church USA – and then the United Presbyterian Church USA
 - Fremont Presbyterian Church in Sacramento, California - UPCUSA
 - Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alamogordo, NM -- RPCES
 - Emanuel Fellowship in Tucson, Arizona – RPCES
 - Another Westminster Presbyterian Church – RPCES - in Ft Walton Beach, Florida;
 - ... and finally, First Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas, – first UPCUSA and quickly PC(USA)

And you? ...

Remember from last week -- Here is how God has “drug me to church” all of my life...

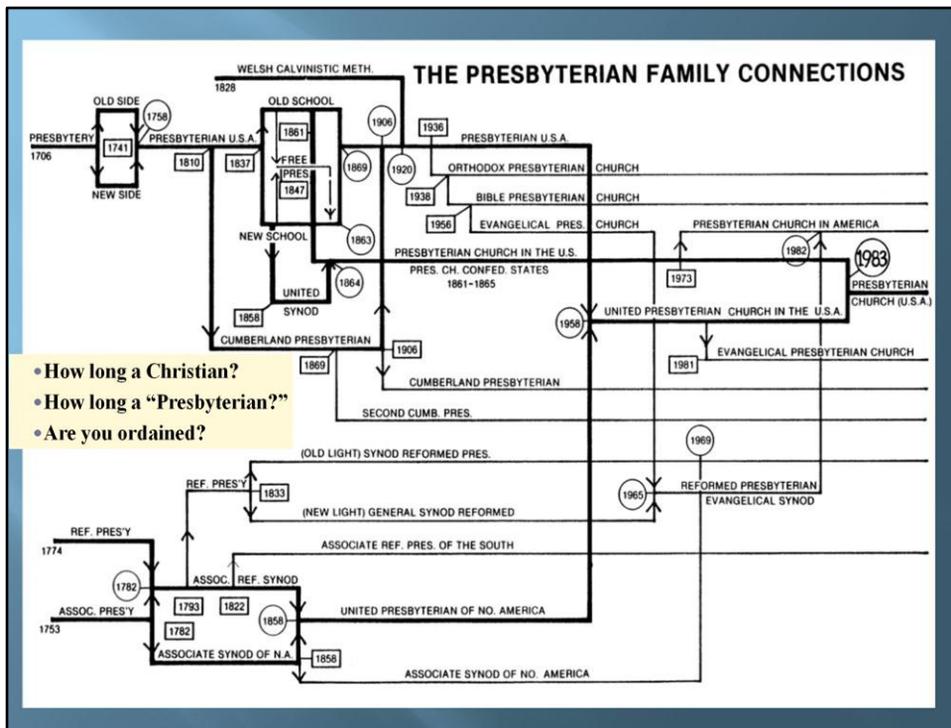
A life-long Presbyterian, I have experience in two different Presbyterian polities – and at several levels in each.

I grew up in 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 (we didn’t know little Jimmy H-H 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 one 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.



... and now, how about you?

Where were you in ‘82?

And what has He done with you since?

Where does your experience put you on “the worms chart?”

There were a few life-long Presbyterians in these classes – most came to FPC from other church backgrounds – Roman Catholic, Orthodox Catholic, Methodist, Christian Reformed, etc. Several are or have been Deacons – and several others elders.

Among the life-long or long-term Presbyterians, most were from the “1706 presbytery” heritage northern strand church.



Lets get *personal*

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church

In the Presbyterian Church (USA) ...

YOU are a member of a
CONGREGATION, which is a member of a
PRESBYTERY, which is organized into a
SYNOD, which is a regional division of the
DENOMINATION – the Presbyterian Church (USA)

-- The **PRESBYTERY** is the center of the PC (USA) --

But first -- let's get personal!

Jesus Christ is the Head of our church (give me an Amen?) – and I hope that you have a direct and personal relationship with Him.

The church does not stand between you and Jesus.

The church does not hold a bucket of Holy Spirit for you to wash in each Sunday.

The Holy Spirit should be dwelling in you – all the time.

The church does not provide the seat for the Father into whose lap we can crawl only on Sunday morning during the prayers of confession in intercession.

We can crawl into his lap at any time and address Him directly as His beloved children, saying: “Abba, Daddy, Father ... forgive me ... give us this day ... your kingdom come to me ...”

Our Father can sit any where He wants (anywhere you need Him to sit) – after all He made “all!”

Instead, the church helps you build your relationship with Him – and organize for you

and with others -- your accomplishment of His work.

(Read the slide)

Note the relationships between and among these parts of the larger body.

Note, too, the last point – this is the fundamental structural power / authority principle in our American Presbyterian church polity.

Lets look at each of these corporate structures in turn and see what our **polity** is and how it is reflected in them – their interrelationships, standards, and functions.

A Christ Centered Family...

- At least two mission attempts from 1905 – about 1912.
- Deliberate planting in 1953 by Nevada Presbytery
- Grew from 47 first meeting to 537 in 1955 to 1620 in 1987
 - *A history of fire and water –*
 - *schools and music –*
 - *service and church-planting.*

www.fpcvegas.org

Let's use the church where I am a member with my family as an example to illustrate.

First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas is 58 years old and has, today, a membership of about 800 people.

There were at least two mission attempts to begin a Presbyterian church in Las Vegas from as early as 1905 – to about 1912. These were the personal vision of the first moderator of presbytery, the Reverend J. Mortimer Swander – whose personal interest is attributed to having kept the records of this work open as long as it was.

In 1953, the Nevada Presbytery made a deliberate planting effort in Las Vegas – announced on the radio and in the newspapers.

This time it worked!

The church grew from 47 first meeting and was organized in that year. It grew to 537 members in 1955 – and to 1620 by 1987.

The original building, masonry laid by its members, burned in the mid-eighties. The new sanctuary building had just opened and all church functions including Sunday School and the nursery transferred into its narthex ! (and a the few ancillary rooms). Can you imagine that in your church?

Its replacement became the multi-purpose building of today – sized for Sunday school classes of the late 80s. Sadly, the roof leaked and so did the walls – the rain and the grass sprinklers doing as effective a job by the mid-90s as the fire had a decade before. By then, the day school and the pre-school had begun to crowd out the church activities – but with the water damage (and mold toxicity) they were closed or spun off to another church, not to return.

All of the Presbyterian witness in the valley grew out of this mother church – one way or another.

Newly called, the Reverend Jim Houston-Hencken officiated at the 50th Anniversary dinner 2003 -- off-site on the strip because the facility would not hold all who wanted to attend!

At dinner, looking over an audience that included many charter members, he observed: “whenever 2 or 3 Presbyterians are gathered, a chicken dies.”

The Session

BOO Chapter G3.02:

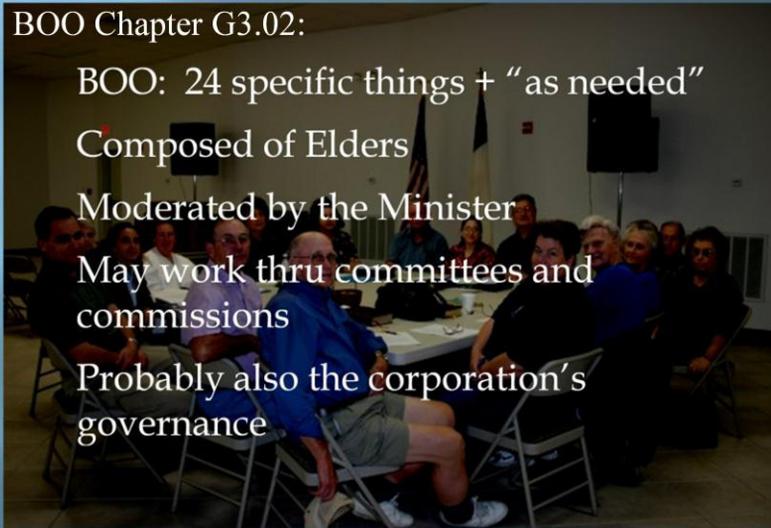
BOO: 24 specific things + “as needed”

Composed of Elders

Moderated by the Minister

May work thru committees and commissions

Probably also the corporation's governance



Let's turn to the governance of the congregation ...

The lists of councils' responsibilities used to actually be lists – now a bit harder to read, they are in paragraph form – and have some address in the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Chapter 3.

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities

The session is the council for the congregation. It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active service as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors. All members of the session are entitled to vote. The pastor shall be the moderator of the session, and the session shall not meet without the pastor or designated moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provisions for a moderator. Presbyteries shall provide by rule for moderators when the session is without a moderator for reasons of vacancy or inconvenience.

The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have

identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. FPC session meets on the 4th Monday of each month.

Since 1955 the northern strand churches have been directed by the Book of Order to incorporate as a civil non-profit where state laws permit.

Who does what?

- The pastors – moderate Session, sit with the Deacons
- Stated Clerk – maintains the records of Session, Deacons
- Staff – does the day-to-day

The Corporation / Nominating Committee of the Congregation

Spiritual Growth Commission of Session

Worship Commission of Session

Congregational Life Commission of Session

-- The Board of Deacons

Support Commission of Session

-- Personnel Committee of Session

To illustrate:

The Congregation – and the Corporation - of the First Presbyterian Church here in Las Vegas meets at least annually and had two standing committees for its work – the corporation’s board and the nominating committee, as required by the *Book of Order*. When the congregation calls a pastor, it prepares for the call with another congregation committee - the pastor nominating committee.

Its Session meets monthly and is organized into four commissions – each charged to dispose of the work within its purview. The Session disposes of all work outside these commission’s charters – and all that overlaps two or more of them.

Recall, our book of order defines a commission with the power to dispose – the committee with only the power to propose – its establishing body then reviews and disposes.

We used to govern through 12-16 committees, and session became overwhelmed reviewing and disposing (which means discussion it all over again).

In addition, the Session is supported by a personnel committee which oversees the employees of the church – our administrators, Christian Educators, and custodians.

The PC (USA) Presbytery

- 173 Presbyteries composed of over 10,000 congregations
- BOO Chapter 3:
 - 27 enumerated powers + *all* not enumerated elsewhere.
 - Composed of Minister-members and its Churches (represented by session-elected, Elder-Commissioners)
 - Moderator is an elected member (minister or elder)
 - Stated Clerk is an elected member (minister or elder)
 - Work “as the whole,” thru committees, commissions, etc.
 - Officers: Moderator and Clerk (plus others)
 - May call / hire staff

So, lets turn to the next “higher council” – to the body whose existence and operation, by the way, makes our congregations “Presbyterian.”

G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of teaching elders and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of their service. A presbytery may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of ruling elders serving as moderators of committees or commissions.

The minimum composition of a presbytery is ten duly constituted sessions and ten teaching elders.

Must meet twice a year, can meet more often – and can meet when specially called.

F-3.0209 General Authority of Councils

Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church. **The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.**

Nevada Presbytery meets in the Spring and in the Fall – in the “south” of our state - and in the “north” - respectively.

The Nevada Presbytery



30 Congregations and specialized ministries

1 new church development – Mesquite NV

CA churches – 2 in Bishop, 1 in Lee Vining, 1 in Truckee, and 1 in South Lake Tahoe.

1 NV church in Boise ID Presbytery

Governed by 53 minister members and 53 + 1 elected elder commissioners (at least)

Here is the Nevada Presbytery:

Actually, now 31 Congregations, new church developments, worshipping fellowships, and specialized ministries:

- Amazing Grace – presbytery’s outreach to the homeless in Las Vegas (truth be told one of the larger bodies in our presbytery! – routinely performing weddings and the sacraments for its members),
- Hispanic, Sudanese – two ethnic worshipping fellowships under presbytery’s care and support
- 1 for the last two years; but now 3 new church developments – the one in Mesquite NV, just up the road about an hour away – and the new two here in the valley since last year’s slide, as our Tai-Laotian and Philippine worshipping fellowships have become NCDs by presbytery action this September. We installed one of their pastors a week ago last Sunday.
- 2 Korean-language congregations – and we installed one of their pastors last Sunday!
- 5 Congregations in Eastern California congregations –2 in Bishop, 1 in Lee Vining, 1 in South Lake Tahoe, and 1 federated Presbyterian-Lutheran church in Truckee.

Note: there is 1 Nevada church dismissed to the Boise (ID) Presbytery in 1989, their having tired of their 12 hour drive to presbytery when it met in the south: Owyhee

Presbyterian Church, Owyhee, NV which celebrated its one hundredth anniversary this summer (the church of Rousas Rushdoony, during is missionary days – for those of you in the Dominion Movement) – and a “would be” in Jackpot (if there was a church still there) – which has long been dismissed to Kendal Presbytery.

Most of our churches are not supported well with air travel – it’s a driving presbytery. When presbytery meets (our stated meetings are twice a year) – no matter where we meet -- someone drives eight hours to the meeting and eight hours back home again.



Presbytery of Nevada

775-852-1551

- Pre-organization (1861-1907)
 - 21 churches / 7 societies
- Organized in 1907 Incorporated 1909
 - 18 churches, 11 mission-funded works
- New School ministers / “Northern Strand”
- Various Synod(s) of California
 - Mission Area: Sierra Mission Partnership
- Active in Social Justice Issues
- Active in GA issues

<http://www.nevadapresbytery.org/>

Again, using Nevada Presbytery to illustrate how this works in the local situation:

Nevada is a mining state –

- open pit mining where the minerals lie close to the surface,
- placer mining where there is flowing water,
- hard rock mining where the treasure is found way underground, and
- especially here in Las Vegas, our own, highly-specialized form of strip-mining – where the deep pockets of tourist wallets abound.

Since the early 1800s in Nevada, prospectors searched, miners came, cities sprang up, stores, schools, and churches were established, rich ore veins produced for a time – and then played out. The prospectors moved down the road, the miners and the cities followed – and the cycle repeated.

Today, there are 108 cities and towns in Nevada, with populations from 50 to over a half million . And there are also over 1300 ghost towns – some of which were populated for less than a year.

Over the last 200 years, 28 of these lasted long enough to have a Presbyterian Church established in them – only for it to be dissolved with the changes in their community.

But today, there are another 28 vibrant churches within the bounds of presbytery in

the communities that have survived –

- from one celebrating its 150th anniversary this last June in Carson City – the state’s capitol (the oldest, continuously-operating church in the state, by the way)
- to three new church developments all within Clark County along with three more worshipping fellowships / specialized ministries.

Across our presbytery, in one or another of these, God is worshipped each week in eight of the world’s languages.

Presbytery was organized in 1907 – and incorporated 1909 – with 18 churches and 11 mission-funded works. The pastors who organized these were primarily New School ministers – but from the “Northern Strand.” No surprise there, Nevada was brought into the union as a Northern State in the Civil War. Our Motto: “Battle Born” (although “skirmish borne” might be more appropriate to the actual level of fighting).

Various Synod(s) of California were the movers – we were the mission field from the west! So thinly populated and so few were our churches and their members, we (along with many other presbyteries) were formed into “Mission Area Units” who shared presbytery-level resources. Our’s, the Sierra Mission Partnership, was the last of the four of these to disassemble in our Synod – and we did this at the end of this last year. We are now inventing our presbytery!

Here in Nevada, we have a long, proud history of social witness – stretching from our earliest missionary establishment:

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

- As far back as sending a delegate (the Moderator of Presbytery, Reverend 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 18th 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.

Who does what?

- Moderator (plus Past and Vice) – moderates Presbytery
- Stated Clerk – maintains the records of Presbytery

Council - Trustees

Committee on Representation

Nominating Committee / Personnel Committee

Committee on Ministry

Committee on Mission Outreach

Committee on Equipping Ministries

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission

The Presbytery – and its Corporation meets at least twice, annually, in hosting churches in the north in the fall and south in the spring - on a pre-determined hosting schedule. It is composed of our 28 churches and its 53 pastor-members – but it meets with only the pastors and *commissioners* from its churches. Traditionally, the Presbyterian Women, with chapters throughout our presbytery's churches also meets at the same time/place.

Its officers are as shown – and the Moderators (past, present, and vice) chair several of these committees, the Stated Clerk is the recorder for these several, as well.

The Council and its financial sub-committee, the Trustees, integrate the business aspects of Presbytery. The Trustees are the Corporation's Board.

The Committee on Representation ensures even and ratioed representation in the Presbytery's governance structure (a role specified in the PCUSA Constitution). Please note that several of the 17 items we voted on this summer change the constitutional ratios for committees – to a more practical “as evenly as possible” – rather than a hard goal, never possible to hit in small-number committee populations!

The nominating and personnel committees propose election of members / hire or contract persons to the governance and operating structure.

The mission work of Presbytery is done in the four “**bolded**” committees.

The only permanent commission has little work to do (we hope!).

Note that there is no “staff” or office -- as you might find in other presbyteries. We are still inventing ourselves – and have decided that staff – and an office, per se, may not be so important to our work.

The officers and committee members primarily work from their homes or home churches – and over the phone and internet! If we add a General Presbyter or presbytery executive, it will be simply an inbox/re-router of information to the committee or persons who do the work. When we invent our presbytery pastoral function (required in the constitution) we may distribute that among the pastors - active and Honorably Retired – adding professional counselors and counseling organizations, as needed, for specific problems as may arise.

The PC (USA) Synod

- 16 Synods composed of 173 Presbyteries
- BOO Chapter 3:
 - 19 enumerated powers + as granted by their presbyteries.
 - Composed of Presbytery Commissioners and staff
 - Moderated by an elected member (minister or elder)
 - Stated Clerk is called (minister or elder)
 - Work “as the whole,” thru committees, commissions, etc.
 - Officers: Moderator and Stated Clerk (plus others)
 - May call / hire staff

Lets go up another step, to another “council” – the synod.

G-3.04 THE SYNOD

G-3.0401 Composition and Responsibilities

The synod is the intermediate council serving as a corporate expression of the church throughout its region. It shall consist of not fewer than three presbyteries within a specific geographic region.

When a synod meets, it shall be composed of commissioners elected by the presbyteries. Each presbytery shall elect at least one ruling elder and one teaching elder to serve as commissioners to synod. A synod shall determine a plan for the election of commissioners to the synod, as well as the method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103; both plans shall be subject to approval by a majority of the presbyteries in the synod. The commissioners from each presbytery shall be divided equally between ruling elders and teaching elders. Each person elected moderator or other officer shall be enrolled as a member of the synod until a successor is elected and installed.

Synod is responsible for the life and mission of the church throughout its region and for supporting the ministry and mission of its presbyteries as they seek to support the witness of congregations, to the end that the church throughout its region becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the

church throughout its region, it shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

Synods must meet twice a year, can meet more often – and can meet when specially called.

The Synod



11 presbyteries in Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, and northern California

(3 presbyteries in Sierra Mission Partnership)

Governed by fifty two Elder/Minister Commissioners, elected by the eleven presbyteries within its boundaries.

Here is our synod - the Synod of the Pacific: 11 presbyteries in Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, and northern California.

Our Synod is composed of fifty two Commissioners elected by the eleven presbyteries within its boundaries – though at the plea of our smaller presbyteries, we agreed to reduce to 39 commissioners because of their shortage of qualified commissioners.

The Synod of the Pacific extends its personnel and benefits system to many of the member Presbyteries – becoming both the accountable body for these employees who serve the presbyteries – and the administrator of the “human resources” aspects of their employment. These aspects are managed at the policy level by the standing Mission Personnel Committee – of which I am a part.

Synod meets for about two days, semi-annually, as both its ecclesiastical and civil bodies.



A “Mission Support” Synod

- This Synod is structured to provide comprehensive support services for its presbyteries.
- It provides:
 - Administrative and Personnel Services
 - Financial Investment and Loan Opportunities
 - Health & Benefit Opportunities
 - Mission Treasury Services
 - Multi-Presbytery gatherings & workshops
 - Ecclesiastical functions as required by the Book or Order

This Synod is not a programmatic body – at the historic insistence of its Presbyteries.

Rather, it is a supportive body – providing the Presbyteries and their congregations with the resources and services they need to do the Mission of the Church.

The presbyteries are very happy with the synod and its operations – despite the recent and entirely misguided suggestions of the Middle Governing Body Commission of GA this month to merge the 16 synods into five regional commissions of the GA – a move that we will vigorously oppose.



Who does What?

- Moderator (and Vice) – moderates Synod
- Stated Clerk – maintains the records of Synod
- Synod Executive and staff – do the day-to-day

Nominating Committee
Committee on Representation
Coordinating Committee

Mission Finance Committee
Mission Partnership Committee
Mission Personnel Committee
Synod Permanent Judicial Commission

The work of synod is guided by its committees. It is all pretty well detailed in the Synod of the Pacific Administrative Manual (SAM)

Here is our “SAM, SAM, SAM - I AM” introduction to the incoming commissioners ... (apologies to Dr Suess’ Cat in the Hat)

All of the commissioners are a member of one of the three biggies:

Mission Finance:

Part of our work is to run a bank! / This works for all to gain
Interest on investments makes / Good sense, it’s very plain!

Mission Partnership:

Still don’t know what part you’ll play? / There’s yet another group that’s
here to stay
Our Partnership Committee’s fun / And they stick around ‘til the work is
done.

Mission Personnel:

Personnel policies in SAM / Are found in section eight
They help with many situations / And we are told they’re really great

Some commissioners are also members of the “smaller committees” – and here is their introduction ...

Nominating:

Too many women / Or too many men
Then we have to / Start over again!

Representation:

COR stands for Representation / They meet with Nominations
To make sure that representation / Is each groups configuration!

Coordinating :

Finally, we have a Council / To coordinate it all
Reps from Presbys and chair-folk / Step forward and answer the call.

They do the agendas / And plan the day
To keep us timely / 'fore we go away

And a few commissioners are on the *Permanent Judicial Commission:*

Their meetings are infrequent / But long and hard they slave
Three days for a hearing / And unanimity they crave.

But cases come, and cases go / All the while they strive
And sometimes disagreements come / But love, in the end, will thrive!



Synod Staff

Synod of the Pacific
200 Kentucky Street, Suite B
Petaluma, CA 94952

www.synodpacific.org



Rob Brink



Wendy Warner



Ani Lele'a



Ann Butterfield



Kendra Fraser



Melinda Durham



Del Howley



Patrice Alshuth

Of course, the day-to-day work is done by the staff ...

Rob Brink – Synod Executive

I serve our Synod / lots of ways
In committees near / and far away

I have the vision / for the work we do
Evolving, / adapting / and keeping us new!

Wendy Warner – Stated Clerk (1/3 time)

The Clerk's job varied / across a wide span
With judicial cases / to manage and then

Our Synod Assemblies, / no matter who's here,
I have the job of / order (to appear)!

Ann Butterfield – Business Services Director

I direct our Business Services / And manage the office, too.
From audits / to budgets / and all the reports -
I give info / that's true.

Ani Lele'a - Treasurer

When a church has money to invest
I find a good return is best!

I'm just the one you'll want to call
For I'm your Treasurer, after all!

Kendra Frazer -

Loans and our website are an important part
Of our Synod operation.

So I am just the one to call
If your church needs renovation!

Melinda Durham -

I'm new around here, / but I still see
About the health / of each employee.

You should not / hesitate to call
I'd like to an- / swer questions all!

Dell Howley –

Dell assists / part-time each week
Handles all / the jobs we seek
When her help / is sought each day
She's ready, / and willing, / and says OK!

Patrice Alshuth -

Your mission check / to Synod
Will put your mind / at ease.

And if you have some / questions
You should call me / please!

... and that is our Synod! SAM , I AM!

The PC (USA) General Assembly

- Composed of 173 Presbyteries (in 16 Synods)
- BOO Chapter 3:
 - 24 enumerated powers + as granted by the presbyteries.
 - Composed of an equal number of Minister and Elder Commissioners from the Presbyteries
 - Moderated by an elected member (minister or elder)
 - Stated Clerk is elected (minister or elder)
 - Work “as the whole,” thru committees, commissions, etc. – and the GA Council, Office of the GA, four \$\$ corporations
 - Officers: Moderator and Stated Clerk (can have others)
 - May hire staff – and lots of it!

Finally we get to the highest council – the General Assembly of the denomination.

G-3.05 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

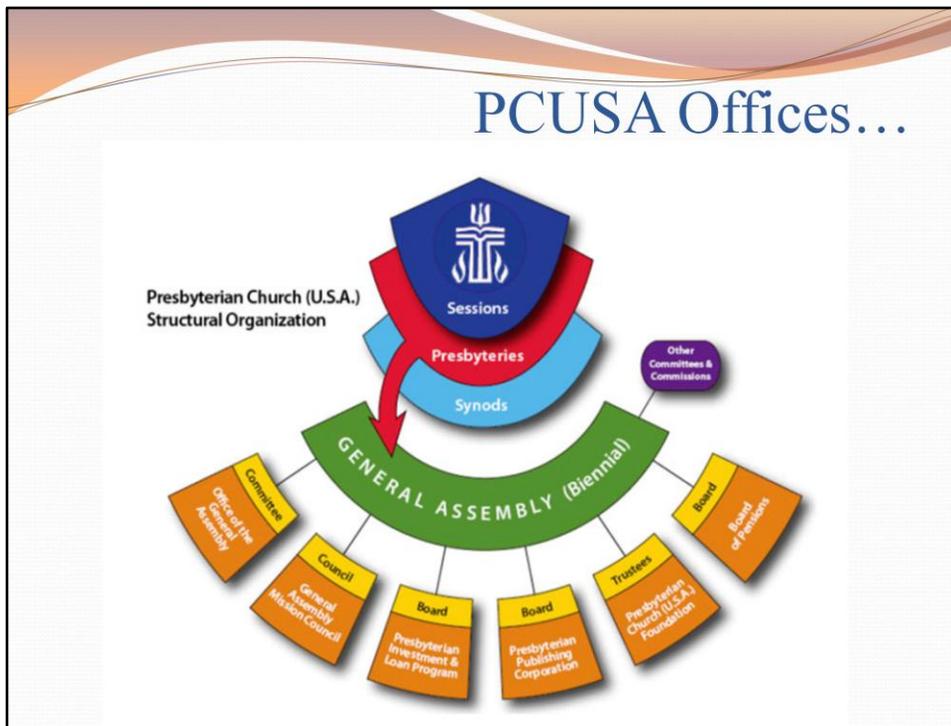
G-3.0501 Composition and Responsibilities

The General Assembly is the council of the whole church and it is representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It shall consist of equal numbers of ruling elders and teaching elders elected by the presbyteries and reflective of the diversity within their bounds (F-1.0403 and G-3.0103), to serve as commissioners.

Each person elected Moderator shall be enrolled as a member of the General Assembly until a successor is elected and installed.

The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the whole church, it shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

Meets every two years (now - to save \$\$), can meet more often – and can meet when specially called.



The day-to-day work of our denomination is coordinated from headquarters in Louisville, KY. (Right next to the newly-built Yum Center for you sports buffs). I toured the headquarters during the moderators conference a year ago, November.

The **GAMC** offices are in the headquarters. All voting members of the GAMC also serve as the board of directors of the **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation** (the principal legal corporation of the denomination), which receives, holds, and transfers property, and facilitates the management of the church's corporate affairs. The GAMC advises and responds to the General Assembly on priorities, programs, and strategies for addressing matters of concern for the Ministries of our church – its primary purpose is to lead and coordinate the total mission program. (<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/gamc/about-gamc/>)

The **OGA** offices are also in the Louisville headquarters; but some are the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This office serves as the ecclesiastical arm of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). One of the six agencies of the PC(USA), it offers support in the areas of governance and structure. It is directed by the [Stated Clerk of the General Assembly](#), with a 70-member staff. (<http://oga.pcusa.org/whoweare.htm>)

The **Presbyterian Foundation** is charged by the General Assembly with the responsibility and accountability for raising money, and today, through New Covenant

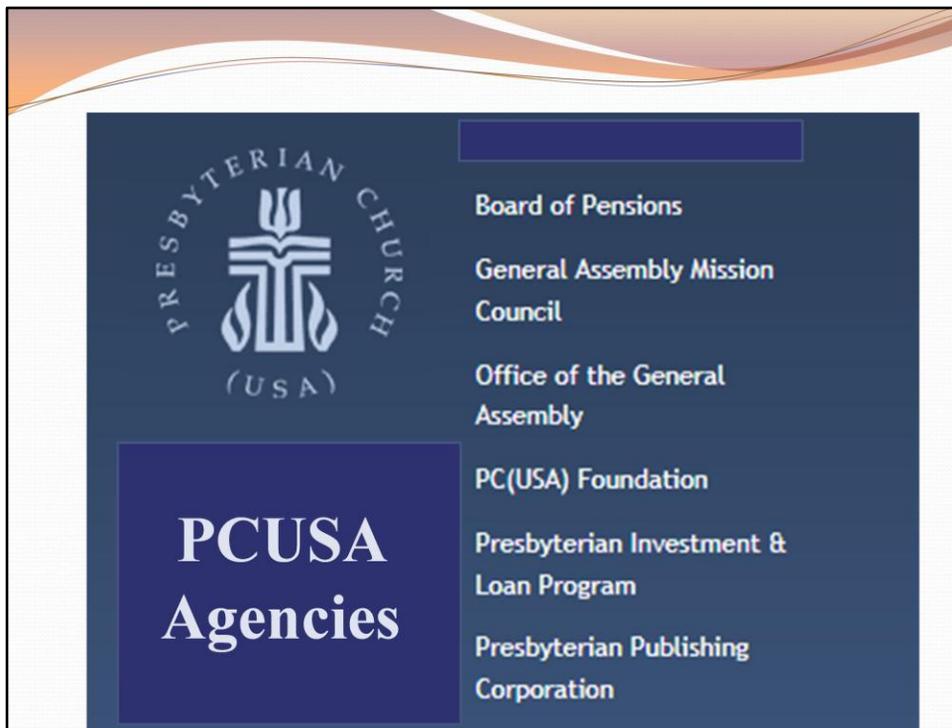
Trust Company, providing trust and investment management services, for the mission of the entire denomination. With assets of \$1.6 billion, the Presbyterian Foundation stands as one of the largest religious foundations in the United States. The Foundation is located in offices just across the river from Louisville – in Jeffersonville, IN. My brother, The Reverend Greg Ritter (you remember “the Voice of the 219th GA”) was the Vice President for Development in the Foundation – and gave them several of their best fund raising years. Although the Foundation is reorganizing itself (“to better serve its clients ...”), you might find yourself interfacing more with a regional representative nearer your office. (http://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/about_us/1/about_us.aspx)

The **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc.** is a nonprofit corporation of [The Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) that was created to provide low-cost loans to churches, governing bodies and related entities of the denomination for capital projects. Funds for these loans come from two sources – endowment funds of PC(USA) and money invested by Presbyterian members, churches and governing bodies. It is located in the headquarters in Louisville. (<http://pilp.pcusa.org/>)

The **Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC)** is the denominational publisher for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but the materials it issues under its [Westminster John Knox Press](#) imprint cover the spectrum of modern religious thought and represent the work of scholarly and popular authors of many different religious affiliations. PPC's Geneva Press imprint is for a specifically Presbyterian audience. Again, offices in the Louisville Headquarters. (<http://www.ppcbooks.com/>)

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), **the Board of Pensions** is the board responsible for benefits. The Board of Pensions is governed by an independent thirty-three member board of directors nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Their principal offices are located in Philadelphia, PA where they have been since before the reunion – but you may interface with them, or a regional representative. (<http://www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt>)

So, when you say “Louisville” you are pretty much talking about the denominational headquarters.



The point of this slide really is to show you how to access to the denominational offices – at the bottom of nearly every page on the PCUSA website – click away to the office of your need!



Here are the officers of the 219th General Assembly – (our most recent) held in Minneapolis in early July, 2010.

See slide.

They were joined by 710 commissioners elected by the 173 presbyteries – and evenly divided between Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Elders (now Teaching and Ruling Elders) – and a host of advisors and observers!

Although 85% of GA commissioners have never been to a GA before – and will never return to a subsequent one, all have served on Session, of course, many will have served their presbytery, and some will have served their synod.

The welcome and announcements for this GA were all expertly and informatively made by my brother, the Reverend Greg Ritter, a member of the hosting, Twin Cities Presbytery.

The commissioners met from the 1st to the 10th in the center of the five-county mosquito-control district, considered many issues and overtures, took a number of actions, and then went home – having sent a package of 17 questions to the presbyteries for their vote:

- Part 1 of the package was a complete revision of the form of our government – removing the procedural stuff leaving the principles of government – which was passed by the majority vote of the presbyteries and is why we are here, today.
- Part 2 – was a proposed new Confession of faith – which was rejected by the presbyteries.
- Part 3 – was a collection of fifteen miscellaneous but specific paragraph revisions to all three parts of the *Book of Order* – of which were all were passed by the presbyteries.

Only one of all of these actions and questions to hit the national news – and because of its misinterpretation by both the news media and both of its “sides” within our own denomination (!) - can you guess which one?

10-A. Gifts and Requirements

Shall the paragraph(s) be amended to read ...:

G-6.0106b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. *Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*

Item 10-A, Gifts and Requirements — On Amending G-6.0106b.

As Vice Moderator, working within our Equipping Ministries Committee report, here is how I proposed this item for vote to our spring Presbytery meeting at Green Valley Presbyterian church in Henderson this year.

The Nevada Presbytery voted to reject this question **60 to 13 with no abstentions** – which is consistent with its several overtures to GA to add the scriptural and confessional definition of marriage / chastity to the ordination standards paragraph since the 1970s (on divorce) and the early 1990s (on the marriage/singleness).

The Presbytery of Nevada seemed to lead the denomination on both of these concerns, by the way.

This language was added to this paragraph only 13 years after we became the denomination we are now. Since then, there have been numerous attempts to remove it.

This year, needing only a simple majority to pass, this question was affirmed by the presbyteries **97 to 54 with 2 abstentions**.

A Presbyterial statement on the issue of human sexuality -- again reflecting this

presbytery's historic stand -- passed our Fall Presbytery (meeting in the First Presbyterian Church in Carson City, two weeks ago) **43 to 28** – the vote indicating to me that we had not really discussed the theology of the two sides – and that there was much more than the content of the statement in the concerns of those opposed to its passage (myself included). So it is not “over.”

10-A. Gifts and Requirements

Shall the paragraph(s) be amended to read ...:

G-6.0106b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either **in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness.** Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. *Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*

OK, I highlighted the incendiary words for us today.

The struck-through definitional language in red had been added to the Book of Order in 1996 as the GA attempted to stop the discussion of the issue (but, they were apparently “fighting fire with gasoline”). The debate on this issue had and has raged for years – and is still probably not over at the GA level.

The red words were replaced by no definition at all – which was read by many conservatives and the popular media as a change in the ordination standards of the church and an acceptance of homosexual lifestyle as being “ok” in the church and among its leaders.

Lets be perfectly clear, here. Neither of these mis-readings are true in the language of the action.

10-A. Gifts and Requirements

Shall the paragraph(s) be amended to read ...:

G-6.0106b. ~~Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church.~~ Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). *Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*

The operative words in both statements (highlighted here) remain unchanged.

For if the marriage/singleness-definitional language reflected the direction of scripture and the guidance of the confessions from 1996 to July 2011,

That ... "Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament."

... these same scriptures and confessions still prescribe these same standards today.

It is just that now their application is laid directly on the backs of the *Governing bodies* (actually the "councils" of the church – Session, Synod, and GA – but specifically the Presbytery) who now must take direct responsibility for applying the standards of scripture and guidance of the confessions in their action of selecting and ordaining their members and our church leaders. There is no wiggle room.

If, as the church asserted from 1996 through 2011, the marriage/singleness-definition is called "sin" by the Scriptures and the confessions, each and every ordination must now either re-affirm the marriage/singleness/unrepentant sin-definition – or be subject

to the disciplinary action of the councils. No excuses for failure to examine.

Middle East Peacemaking

Approved a greatly amended report that found broad consensus and common ground for peacemaking work in Israel/Palestine, calling for:



- Immediate cessation of all violence (by all sides);
 - Reaffirmation of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation;
 - End of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories;
 - Freeze on estab. & expansion of Israeli settlements in the W. Bank, and on acquisitions of Palestinian land in E. Jerusalem
- *And more!

Well, lets go on ...

These next few slides are what the Reverend Sharon Stanley shared with us at Fall Presbytery about the 210th GA 2010 in Minneapolis, MN – which she attended as a commissioner from San Joaquin Presbytery. Although Sharron was a commissioner to GA and is a regular attender of the Nevada Presbytery, you may know her as the founder and Executive director of the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Mission (FIRM).

As usual, GA addressed other controversial issues this year – some hit the national news ... others just hit the denominational news...

Beyond the 17 amendments to the Constitution, here is what Sharron also saw happening at GA this summer in Minneapolis...

GA took this action on Middle East Peacemaking ...

And here is Sharron – on-screen! (Upper left corner)

Caterpillar

Approved Mission Responsibility Through Investment Report that:

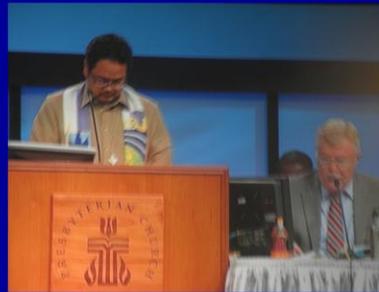
- Provides update on all corporations of interest;
 - Acknowledges “Caterpillar has in many ways provided positive leadership, resources for development and disaster assistance & safety improvements;”
 - Denounces Caterpillar for non-peaceful uses of products;
 - Calls upon Caterpillar to review its involvement in obstacles to peace in Israel-Palestine, and to take positive steps to end this.
- IMMEDIATE DIVESTMENT REJECTED - corporate engagement continues.



GA took this action on another hot-button issue – corporate investment responsibility. This is a hot-button issue among several members of the Mt View Presbyterian Church in Summerlin, by the way.

Civil Union and Marriage

GA approved both the Final & Minority Reports of the “Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage” & requested they be sent out for study by the wider church.



Maintained the definition of marriage as “a man and a woman.” no change has occurred, or is pending.

GA received this report – and sent it out for further study ...

As I said ... its not over...

Middle Governing Body Commission

**GA created a Middle
Governing Commission with
the power to act as the GA
(upon request of presbyteries
and synods).**



The Commission has the power “to organize new synods and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing” (G-13.0103m) and “to approve the organization, division, uniting or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods” (G-13.0103n) by majority request of the affected Pres. or Synod.

And GA created this commission – potentially a loose cannon – or if you will allow, loose “canon.”

(A commission can act for the body that creates it. A committee must recommend to the body that created it for action.)

As part of the spring Synod this year, Synod of the Pacific staff, other Synod commissioners, Presbytery Executives, and I have met with this commission – and they ended up being fairly impressed with our synod’s organizational and operating model.

[Canon - Definition and More from the Free Merriam-Webster ...](#)

noun: a large heavy gun usually mounted on a carriage

[Canon | Define Canon at Dictionary.com](#)

noun. 1. an ecclesiastical rule or law enacted by a council or other competent authority

In either case, a *loose* one can cause much damage if careening about as on the deck of a rolling ship.



So - here is our denomination in whole in 2010:

(under the watchful eyes of John Calvin and John Knox)

2+ million members in 10,751 congregations.

From a "council" perspective, that is: 10,751 Sessions, 173 Presbyteries, 16 Synods, and General Assembly.

Next Week ...

- Peter's version of the run-up to 1982...
- Our Denomination's organizational history and its context
- The "my" stories – Nevada's story – FPC's story
- **Who are all these people?**
- And what do we believe ... now?
- 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.