

Hello again - and welcome back to class!

As a PCUSA ruling elder, **Grace and Peace to each of you!** -- from the congregation and Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas, Nevada – serving the whole Las Vegas valley from the “cross-roads of the valley” - where the Los Angeles to Salt Lake and the Phoenix to Reno freeways intersect like a big “X.”

As the immediately Past-Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada, **God be with you -- and greetings!** -- from the other 32 neighboring Presbyterian churches, worshipping fellowships, new church developments, and specialized ministries and from the 53 active and retired pastors who together, comprise the Presbytery of Nevada which covers the state and five counties in Eastern California.

And as a Nevada Presbytery Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific (of which our presbytery is a part), **welcome and enjoy God’s Holy love today!** -- from the 397 churches in the other 10 presbyteries of our Synod which also includes Oregon, Idaho, and Northern California ...

I give you these greetings from all three of these councils in our church – and from my heart.

I am Art Ritter, your teacher today.



Lets begin with prayer ...

Open our hearts and minds to your
teaching Lord that we may learn
your ways and glorify you in
everything we do. Amen

2012 APA Certification Course (Elective)
PRESBYTERIAN 101 (2.5 Hours)

History, Polity, Structure, Terminology of PC(USA)

see: <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/101/>

I. Introductions

II. Presbyterian Ethos

III. A little Presbyterian history

IV. Introduction to polity – the Constitution: Part 1 Part 2

V. Entities/agencies of the Presbyterian Church

VI. Terms and acronyms we know and love

VII. Questions, comments, **quiz – final exam!**

Just to make sure that you are in the right room – this is the PCUSA Administrative Professionals Association 2012 Certification Course Elective class on “**Presbyterian 101.**”

In six blocks, we address these suggested topics – generally in this order.

But, to get started here, I hope you have completed the first two blocks before opening this one (you might make more sense of this one of you have).

But, to get started, ...

So where do we fit in?



Recall that earlier we asked: “Where do we, as Presbyterians, fit into the Body of Christ?”

Well, remember the look we took?

As recounted in Acts 2

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

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

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

We started with the birthday of the church.

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

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

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

Let's see what happened next ...

... and they all went home.



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

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

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

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

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

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

... “How a Gentile Becomes a Christian”

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

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

Lets look at the polity of what happened:

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

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

So **Paul and Barnabas were appointed**, along with some other believers, to **go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question**. ... [this is the first 'overture' – rising from a difficult question question - and the first 'overture managers' were sent to the first gathering of a larger part of the church – a 'council' – to resolve the dispute.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The **people read it and were glad** for its **encouraging message** [the commission dealt in love with the church so that this was their response]. ³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, **said much to encourage and strengthen the believers**. ³³

After spending some time there, **they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them.**

What do we see here?

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

So, where do we fit in? We;;, we might argue that the first church – was really the First Presbyterian Church!

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

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

**Matthew 18:

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

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

[*Witnesses*]

Deuteronomy 17:6

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

Deuteronomy 19:15

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

[illegible]

(Trace from left to right to “PCUSA – reunited after 1983”)

Sadly, not all of the issues were resolved as amiably as in the first council as the first two charts show – from Acts 2 to the 1500s and toward today across the world.

In fact, with issues and resolutions – the church saw splits over unresolved issues and (as detailed on the last chart, showing the Presbyterian witness in America) re-joins when they eventually resolved ... or just went away.

Looks like what we American Presbyterians do best is: split and re-join / split and rejoin ...

8

... ah, we Scottish!

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

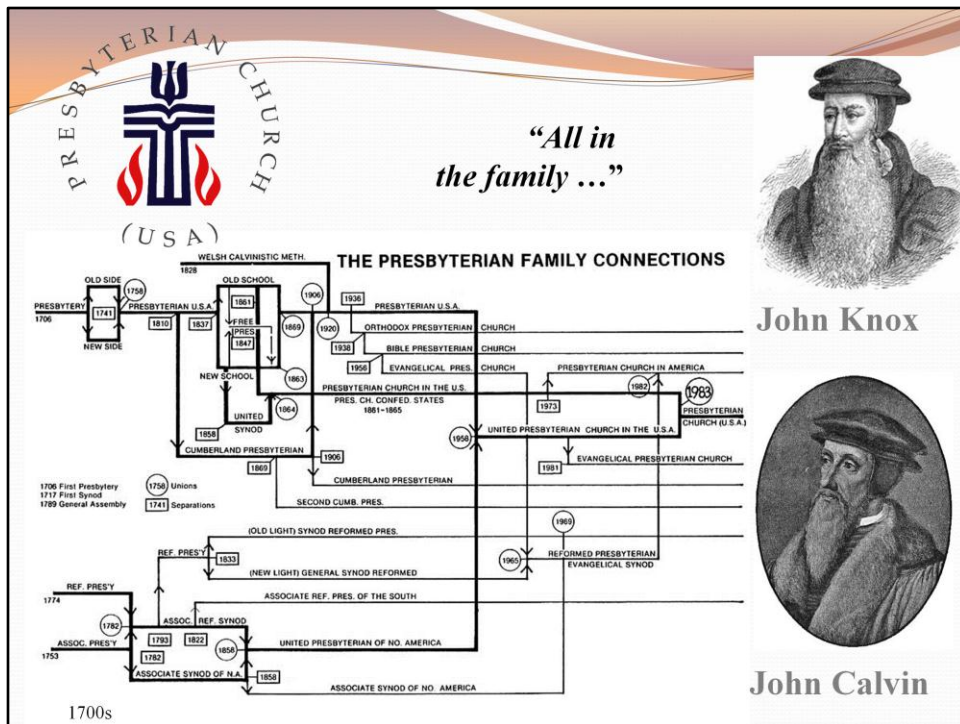
We will spend some time with this chart – but I will focus us on the parts we are discussing – American Presbyterianism in the USA

Note that there are three heritage strands of American Presbyterian witness beginning in the 1700s on the left side of the last chart (trust me, there were splits and joins among Presbyterians in Europe before they immigrated here) – and nine separate denominations of Presbyterians on the right side of the chart, today. And these are just the ones that the PCUSA recognizes! What a tangled web they ... ah, lets not go there.

Back when I was in the Air Force, we used to show a ‘worms chart’ like this for messy relationships such as our 300 year history has been ...

... and we always got a reaction like yours today.

So we would follow it with a nice, straight lined wiring diagram like ...



... this! - which we called the 'hummer' – because the reaction to it would be a considered, "Hmmm!" – again, just like yours, today ...

For 300 years, we Presbyterians have been doing what we do best – disagreeing, discussing, and resolving – sometimes, by splitting and re-joining over our controversies, many of them the same ones, over and over!

The PCUSA 2012: How we got 'here' (The Layman Online: [http://www.layman.org/carmensblog/12-02-16/The PCUSA 2012 How we got here .aspx](http://www.layman.org/carmensblog/12-02-16/The_PCUSA_2012_How_we_got_here.aspx)) comments --

Depending upon your personal spheres of influence and your exposure to Presbyterian news, for the past couple of years you have been hearing rumblings about the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s passage of a new Form of Government (and the accompanying Amendment 10A which has had the effect of removing from the constitution the explicit language of "fidelity in marriage [or] chastity in singleness" as the Biblical standard for ordained officers of the PCUSA).

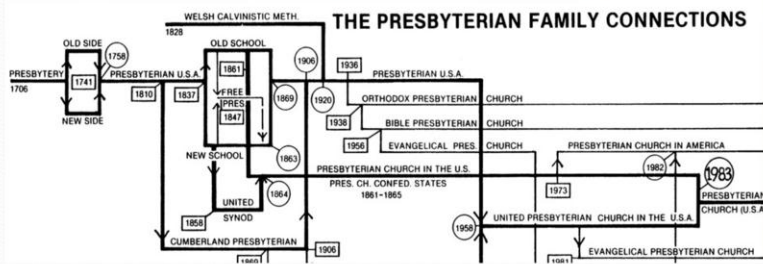
We actually had some 18 amendments to the Book of Order referred for action by the presbyteries along with other presbytery business - thanks to the 219th GA -- and a proposed new Confession! Information overload enough for everyone. No wonder there is still much confusion over what really happened. For example, the fact is, the

ordination standards did not change; but that is another story, maybe another whole elective course!

Some of you might think that this newFOG is a sudden and drastic response to a recent event. Actually, Presbyterians have been dealing with these issues for decades (and as this chart shows ... not too well!). It is a long story, and this is my attempt to bring you up to speed on "how we got here."

Let's follow the main thread that is our denominational heritage through this maze...

The Sweep of Things ...



**First Great Awakening
1720-1750**

Presbyterianism was a dominant force in American culture.

It begins in 1706 with three congregations of Presbyterians from Europe. Since then, as Presbyterians in the United States of America, we have a proud history and a Godly heritage.

Devout Scottish immigrants were among the earliest settlers of the New Land, and the first presbytery was established in 1706 in Philadelphia. John Witherspoon, the only active clergyman who signed the Declaration of Independence, was a Presbyterian.

For 250 years, Presbyterianism was a dominant force in American culture.

In addition to planting thousands of churches, Presbyterians established scores of colleges and seminaries and hundreds of hospitals. For the 100 years between 1850 and 1950, Presbyterians were the greatest mission-sending denomination the world had ever seen.

But Presbyterians were a part of a general infusion of religious thought into American life and practice. As [Wikipedia](#) tells it:

First Great Awakening

The First Great Awakening began in 1720 and lasted to about 1750. Ministers from

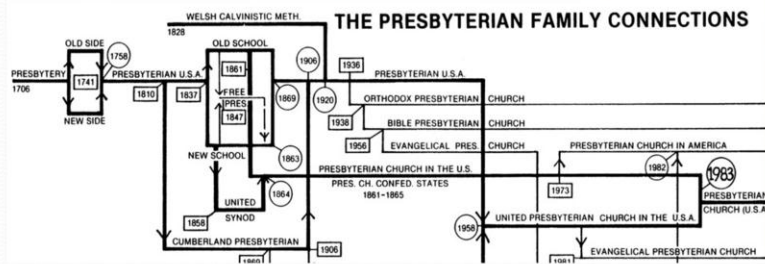
various evangelical Protestant denominations supported the Great Awakening. Additionally, pastoral styles began to change. In the late colonial period, most pastors read their sermons, which were theologically dense and advanced a particular theological argument or interpretation. Leaders of the Awakening such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield had little interest in merely engaging parishioners' minds; they wanted far more to elicit an emotional response from their audience, one which might yield the workings and evidence of saving grace. They also wanted to see people who were noticeably moved in the audience and stood out amongst the rest.

Joseph Tracy, the minister, historian, and preacher who gave this religious phenomenon its name in his influential 1842 book, *The Great Awakening*, saw the First Great Awakening as a precursor to the American Revolution.

The evangelical movement of the 1740s played a key role in the development of American democratic thought, as well as the belief of the free press and the belief that information should be both shared and completely unbiased. (And you thought Al Gore invented the internet!)

These concepts in the period of the American Revolution helped create a demand for the separation of church and state. The First Great Awakening had a major impact on the American Presbyterians. Inspired by the evangelical preaching of George Whitefield and others, Gilbert Tennent delivered a sermon in West Nottingham, Maryland in 1740 on "The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry." In the sermon, he asserted some current Presbyterian church leaders might be academic "Pharisee-teachers" who did not have the same faith or enthusiasm as newly converted followers, a controversial view which divided the church (New Side / Old Side). Together with his brother William Tennent, he led the Presbyterian part of the Great Awakening revivalist movement in America.

The Sweep of Things ...



**First Great Awakening
1720-1750**

**Second Great Awakening
1800-1870s**

**Presbyterians were the greatest mission-sending
denomination the world had ever seen.**

Second Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening was strongest in the “western states” (though today we wouldn't even call these states “the mid-west,” today). Following the revival at Cane Ridge in Kentucky, and also in the “burned over” district of upstate New York (so called because of the numerous revivals that crisscrossed the region) – but, how “west” is that? -- church membership soared. New denominations, groups, and societies formed from this revival – including: Seventh-day Adventists, Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and the Latter Day Saint movement.

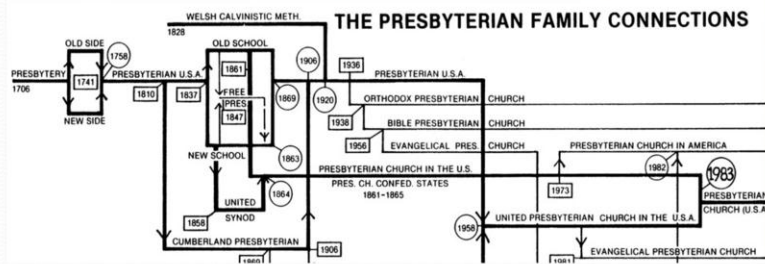
The Presbyterians contributed here, and again divided (New School / Old School). Not shown on our family chart, in 1803 Barton Stone and others withdrew from the Kentucky Presbytery and formed the Springfield Presbytery and withdrew from Presbyterianism, their intention to be solely part of the body of Christ. These writers appealed for the unity of all who follow Jesus, suggested the value of congregational self-governance, and lifted the Bible as the source for understanding the will of God. They denounced the divisive use of the Augsburg Confession – and were cast from the Kentucky Presbytery with their ministerial credentials lifted; but they formed the Disciples of Christ Church. Not all revival is pretty. The abolition movement emerged in the North from the wider Second Great Awakening 1800-1840.

This was the last of the “great awakenings” to be driven by broad, popular religious

revival and booming church membership – and the last to occur in a country whose population was expanding along a frontier rapidly moving westward.

Even so, for the 100 years between 1850 and 1950, Presbyterians were the greatest mission-sending denomination the world had ever seen.

The Sweep of Things ...



First Great Awakening
1720-1750

"fundamentalists" - "modernist" controversy >>

Second Great Awakening
1800-1870s

1910 - Auburn Affirmation

Third Great Awakening
1880-1910

Third Great Awakening

The Third Great Awakening in 1880-1910 was also characterized by new denominations and soaring church membership – adding, as well, very active missionary work (especially foreign missions), and also the Social Gospel approach to social issues. The early part of the 20th century saw continued growth in both of these major witnesses of the church. It also saw the growth of Fundamentalist Christianity (a movement of those who believed in the literal interpretation of the Bible as the fundamental source of the religion) as distinguished from Modernist Christianity (a movement holding the belief that Christianity needed to be re-interpreted in light of modern scientific theories such as evolution or the rise of degraded social conditions brought on by industrialization and urbanization).

But by the very early 1900's the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (Northern) was deeply split between conservative traditionalists, or the "fundamentalists," and a liberal progressive group that became known as the "modernists." These modernists believed it was time for a re-examination of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), which was still the foundation of Presbyterian doctrines.

Conservatives opposed the re-examination and sought to have the body reaffirm its commitment to the basic tenets of the Reformed faith. This controversy – and the sparks that flew from it led to ...

The 1910 General Assembly which adopted a set of five "essential and necessary" doctrines for ordination to the Presbyterian ministry. These became known as the Five Points. The Five Points included:

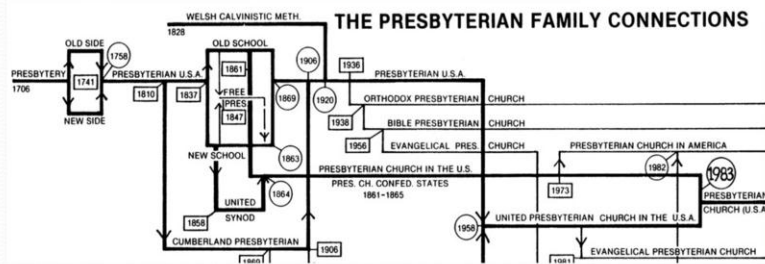
1. the inerrancy of the Bible,
2. the virgin birth of Christ,
3. Christ's substitutionary atonement,
4. Jesus' bodily resurrection, and
5. the authenticity of miracles.

This marks the last time that our branch of mainline Presbyterianism in the United States proved itself willing to enumerate a list of essential tenets. The backlash was intense and has proven unrelenting for 100 years.

For Presbyterians, this controversy reached a head in 1924 when the move toward aggressively anti-modernist fundamentalism caused a backlash in the form of the Auburn Affirmation — a document embracing modernism and "liberty of thought and teaching." Although the 1930s and 1940s and the ensuing neo-orthodox theological consensus mitigated much of this during the mid-20th century, disputes erupted again beginning in the mid-1960s, over the extent of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the issue of ordination of women, and, especially since the 1990s, over the issue of ordination of gays and lesbians.

It also marked the beginning of the lesser-celebrated, 'conservative exodus' — from both the northern and southern strands -- that continues today.

The Sweep of Things ...



First Great Awakening
1720-1750

Second Great Awakening
1800-1870s

Third Great Awakening
1880-1910

By 1950, Presbyterianism in the US had changed significantly.

One manifestation of that change was structural. The denomination adopted a corporate paradigm, a leadership structure modeled after the prevailing business culture. In this model, the historical Presbyterian sense of a bottom-up denomination was inverted and congregations began to be perceived as serving the denomination instead of the other way around. Upper levels of leadership within the denomination gained increasing power.

As the cultural revolution of the 1960s swept the nation, rebellion and rejection of authority were celebrated not only in the culture, but also within the Presbyterian church. Seminaries and seminarians embraced avant-garde theologies that a generation later would pervade the clergy ranks. A growing number of faculty began to espouse a naturalistic worldview, rejecting the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, the bodily resurrection and the atonement. Mirroring the culture, there was increasing focus on social justice that, within the Presbyterian church, developed theologies of progressive human improvement that are simply not Biblical. To the good, the causes of women's and civil rights were advanced within the church community but often at the expense of historical orthodoxy.

THE PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The diagram illustrates the historical connections between various Presbyterian denominations. Key denominations and their founding years are shown in circles: OLD SCHOOL (1813), PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A. (1810), FREE PRES. (1847), NEW SCHOOL (1863), UNITED SYNOD (1858), CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN (1861), ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (1938), BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (1938), EVANGELICAL PRES. CHURCH (1956), PRES. CH. CONFED. STATES 1861-1865, UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A. (1973), EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (1981), PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (1802), and PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) (1963). The diagram shows how these denominations have evolved and connected over time, with some branches merging or splitting.

Third Great Awakening 1880-1910

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THE PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The diagram illustrates the historical lineage and connections of various Presbyterian and related churches. Key entities and their founding years are shown in boxes, while years in circles indicate significant events or mergers. Arrows indicate the flow of connections and mergers over time.

- WELSH CALVINISTIC METH.** (1828) connects to **OLD SCHOOL** (1806).
- OLD SCHOOL** (1806) connects to **PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.** (1810) and **FREE PRES.** (1841).
- PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.** (1810) connects to **ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1938) and **BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1938).
- FREE PRES.** (1841) connects to **EVANGELICAL PRES. CHURCH** (1956).
- ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1938) connects to **BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1938).
- BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1938) connects to **EVANGELICAL PRES. CHURCH** (1956).
- EVANGELICAL PRES. CHURCH** (1956) connects to **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA** (1963).
- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA** (1963) connects to **PRES. CH. CONFED. STATES 1861-1865**.
- PRES. CH. CONFED. STATES 1861-1865** connects to **UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.** (1958).
- UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.** (1958) connects to **EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1961).
- EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** (1961) connects to **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)** (1963).
- OLD SIDE** (1741) connects to **NEW SIDE** (1796).
- NEW SIDE** (1796) connects to **PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.** (1810).
- PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.** (1810) connects to **NEW SCHOOL** (1837).
- NEW SCHOOL** (1837) connects to **UNITED SYNOD** (1858).
- UNITED SYNOD** (1858) connects to **CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN** (1861).
- CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN** (1861) connects to **PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.** (1810).

pivotal year in our history: 1967
membership decline >>>>>>>>
theological shift - "salvation" to "liberation."

15

[illegible]

Third Great Awakening 1880-1910

pivotal year in our history: 1967
membership decline >>>>>>>>
theological shift - "salvation" to "liberation."
No accord with Presbyterians in the pews

16

THE PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The diagram illustrates the historical connections between various Presbyterian denominations. Key events and dates include:

- 1706:** PRESBYTERY
- 1796:** PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A. (Old Side)
- 1810:** PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A. (New Side)
- 1828:** WELSH CALVINISTIC METH.
- 1837:** PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A. (New Side)
- 1847:** FREE PRES.
- 1861-1865:** PRES. CH. CONFED. STATES
- 1863:** PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.
- 1862:** PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
- 1863:** PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
- 1868:** UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.
- 1896:** PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.
- 1906:** PRESBYTERIAN U.S.A.
- 1938:** BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
- 1938:** ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
- 1956:** EVANGELICAL PRES. CHURCH
- 1959:** UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.
- 1961:** EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
- 1963:** PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

‘More Light’

17

[illegible]

... redefined "Missions" as "Mission."

18

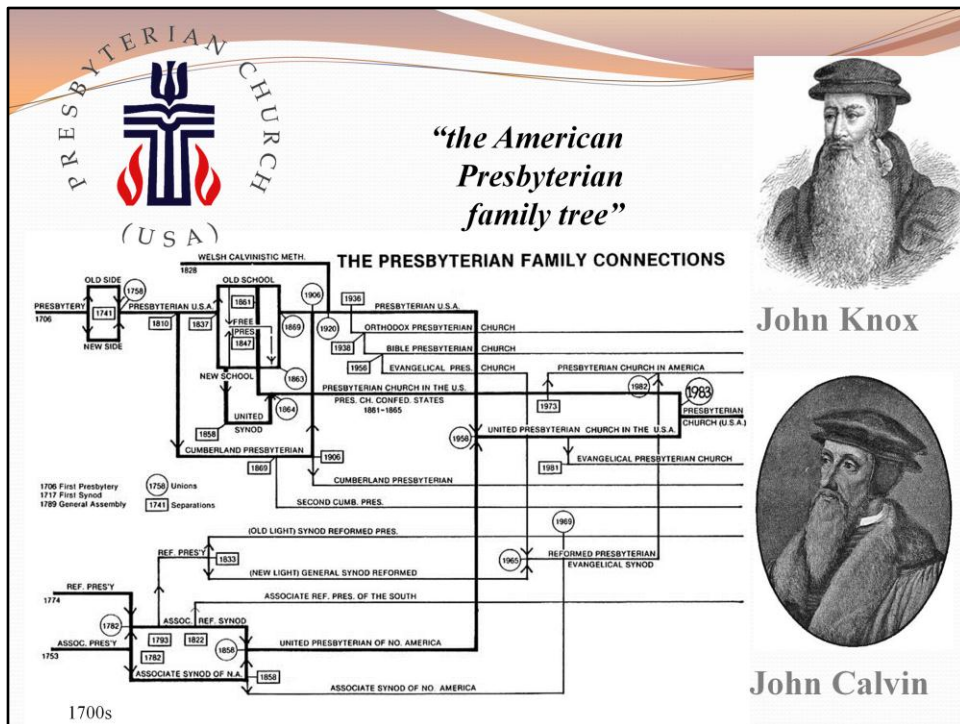
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Fourth “Great Awakening” 1960s – 70s

... redefined "Missions" as "Mission."

19



So here is the organizational history of American Presbyterian – as drawn by the PCUSA; but told above by some other observers.

Note there are actually a few more Presbyterian denominations today than are shown on this chart – because we can't seem to keep up with the modern splits!

Even so, we began with three threads (on the left side of the chart) a little over 300 years ago as our forefathers and foremothers fled Europe with a Bible in one hand and a copy of the Westminster Confession in the other.

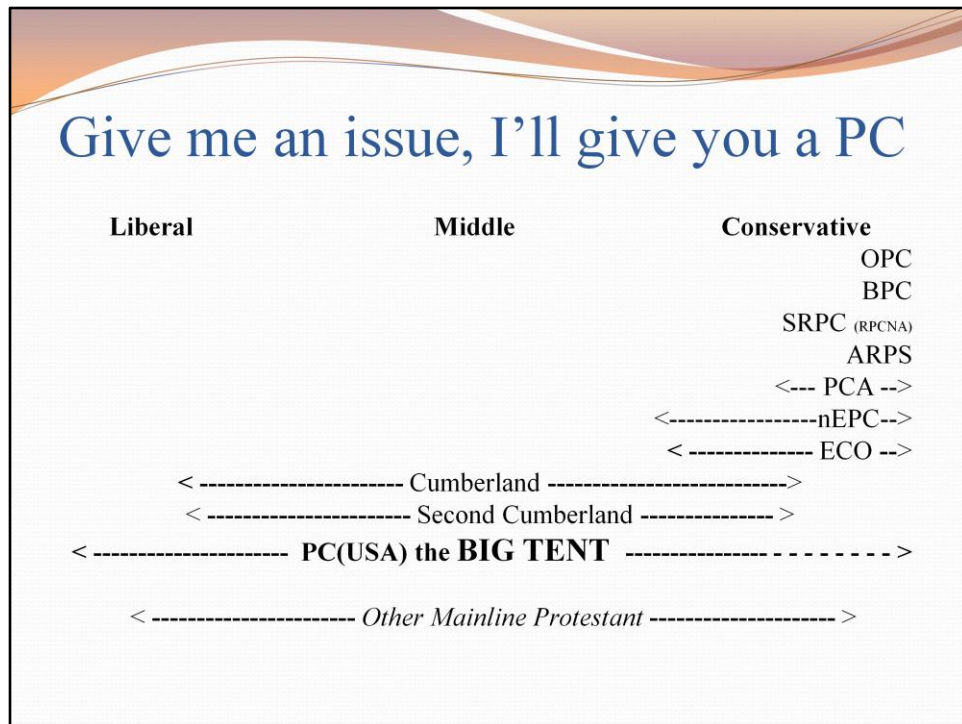
At the other end, we see at least nine distinct denominations (remember who constructed this chart!) – and that this list is growing, the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (or, 'ECO') having organized out of a year of concerned conversation just this last January!

As in the '30s, most of the smaller ones jumped ship as their parent became more liberal along one line or another – leaving their parent even more liberal as they took their relatively conservative voice and witness with them as they went. (Review the 1930s split-outs)

Note that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church that left in the 30s joined and gave up their name in 1965 (My family and I were in the joined denomination for almost 9

years – started a congregation in our house, in fact). The EPC we know today came out of the ‘northern thread’ in 1981 – just before the 1983 reunion of the northern and southern threads (ending a split that had originated with the Civil War - we have long memories, it seems).

Still -- Never let a good name go to waste – eh?



Here is where many of today's Presbyterian denominations hit the liberal / conservative splatter chart – along essentially the “literal interpretation / obedience to scripture” axis:

Practically all U.S. Presbyterian bodies profess some measure of doctrinal Calvinist propositionalism, relatively-literalist hermeneutics (preaching), and conservative politics. In the United States, because of past or current doctrinal differences, Presbyterian churches often overlap, with congregations of many different Presbyterian groups in any one place – so it becomes important to have some knowledge of the differences. The largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States is the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) or PC(USA). Other Presbyterian bodies in the United States include the [Presbyterian Church in America](#), the [Orthodox Presbyterian Church](#), the [Evangelical Presbyterian Church](#), the [Reformed Presbyterian Church](#), the [Bible Presbyterian Church](#), the [Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church](#) (ARP Synod), the [Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#), the [Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America](#), the [Westminster Presbyterian Church in the United States](#) (WPCUS), and the [Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States](#) (RPCUS) – but who is counting?

The **Orthodox Presbyterian Church** and the **Bible Presbyterian Church** both came out of the northern strand of the “1706 presbytery” heritage in the 1930s in protest to its growing liberalism (maybe better understood as its absorption of either German

“higher critical” (cultural) interpretation of scripture or of the surrounding “popular cultural influences” interpretation). These are small denominations, focused on the theological positions and issues of their protest – and remain pretty conservative in their beliefs and actions. For example, they do not elect women as Elders.

The Synod Reformed PC (SRPC), or the **Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America** (RPCNA), a [Christian church](#) surviving from the “1774 Reformed and 1754 Associate presbytery” heritage, is a small [Presbyterian](#) denomination with churches throughout the [United States](#), in southeastern [Canada](#), and in a small part of [Japan](#). Its beliefs place it in the conservative wing of the [Reformed](#) family of [Protestant](#) churches. Below the [Bible](#)—which is held as [divinely inspired](#) and [without error](#)—the church is committed to several "subordinate standards", together considered its constitution: the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#) and [Larger](#) and [Shorter Catechisms](#), along with its *Testimony*, *Directory for Church Government*, *Book of Discipline*, and *Directory for Worship*. All communicant members "believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life", according to the first of several [vows](#) required for such membership. The RPCNA has a long history, having been a separate denomination in the United States since colonial days. They do not elect women as Elders.

The **Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church** as it exists today is the remnant of a small [denomination](#), which was formed from the Synod of the South, a division of the [Associate Reformed Church](#) – also surviving from the “1774 Reformed and 1754 Associate presbytery” heritage. The original Associate Reformed Church resulted from a merger of the Associate Presbytery ([from the Seceder tradition of the 18th century](#)) and most of the [Reformed Presbytery](#) ([from the Covenanter tradition of the 17th century](#)) in Philadelphia in 1782. It is a theologically and socially [conservative](#) denomination and one of the oldest in the United States. Evangelist [Billy Graham](#) attended the Chalmers Memorial ARP Church in [Charlotte, North Carolina](#), as a child; his parents were members of the congregation. Mr. Graham was, however, later ordained as a [Southern Baptist](#) minister. They do not elect women as Elders.

Seeing the reunion coming, the PCA (**Presbyterian Church in America**) came out of the southern thread of our heritage before the 1983 reunion happened - for the same reasons as the other conservative churches had jumped from the northern thread (and because of a strong dose of southern presbyterial decentralization). It was joined by the (smaller) conservative Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod (RPCES) - itself a union of churches from the “1774 Reformed and 1754 Associate presbytery” Scottish-seceder and covenanter heritages, and our northern thread. They are the second largest Presbyterian denomination in the US – and as you would expect, are a *bit* more “liberal” than their smaller brethren just because of their size. They do not elect women as Elders.

The “latest” **Evangelical Presbyterian Church** – also came out of the “1706 presbytery” heritage northern strand (in the 1980s) – again in protest to the northern strand’s growing liberalism and they grabbed this apparently popular conservative brand no longer in use by the earlier escapee which had merged into the RPCES and then joined with the PCA. Another small denomination, its confessions include the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms – and their “Essentials of Our Faith,” a statement of historic evangelicalism. They remain pretty conservative in their beliefs and actions regarding these essentials – but are more liberal than the ones listed above them here - on “non-essential matters.” For example, they believe that electing women as Elders is a matter of the congregation’s discernment and that church officers may “scruple” (or, “take exception to”) the Westminster Standards (within bounds).

The **Cumberland** churches long ago, just after the New side/Old side split in the First Great Awakening (and themselves split along color lines). They place far less emphasis on intellectualism and the Westminster Confession. It has a socially progressive tradition – the first to train and ordain women to leadership roles. Their constituency and theology resembles that of the United Methodist Church, appealing mainly to long-established families with revivalistic religious tastes and generally conservative cultural dispositions. They have elected women as Elders longer than our heritage has.

In a nutshell (now there is an apt simile), the 1983 north / south merger essentially consolidated the moderate-to-liberal American Presbyterians of the “1706 presbytery” heritage back into one body (the remaining Cumberland Presbyterian Churches being the other moderate to liberal Presbyterian denominations).

For the most part, PC(USA) Presbyterians are not unlike similar mainline traditions such as the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ in their theology – and are fairly (in some instances, strongly) progressive (read: “liberal”) on matters such as social justice, environmental issues, sexual morality, and economic issues. Like other mainline denominations, the PC(USA) holds a broad range of conservative-to-liberal thought, a great deal of demographic aging, congregations with fewer and fewer new members, and a steadily declining membership total.

Interestingly, the recent trend (so far) is that of conservative-minded groups in the PC(USA) (such as the Confessing church movement) remaining in the main body, rather than leaving to form new, break-away groups, as the most theologically conservative churches usually did in the past (i.e., the OPC, BPC, EPC, and PCA). Individual conservative churches and members; however, are leaving the PCUSA for the more conservative and already-established EPC and, more recently, the ECO.



The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with more than 10,000 congregations which are organized into 173 presbyteries and 16 synods -- it is the largest [Presbyterian](#) denomination in the U.S. – but somewhat battered by our recent history.

Its just under two million lay people members and 13,000 [ordained ministers](#) still make the PC(USA) the most visible and influential Presbyterian denomination in North America.

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

Canada

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

Latin America

Presbyterianism arrived in Latin America in the 19th century. The biggest Presbyterian church is the [National Presbyterian Church of Mexico](#) ("Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México"), which has around 2,500,000 members and associates, but there are other small denominations. In Brazil, the [Presbyterian Church of Brazil](#) (*Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil*) totals approximately 788,553 members; other Presbyterian churches (Independents, United, Conservatives, Renovated - Charismatic, Free, Fundamentalist, Evangelical) in this nation have around 350,000 members. There are probably more than four million members of Presbyterian churches in all of Latin America. Presbyterian churches are also present in Peru, Bolivia, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Argentina and others, but with few members. Some Latin Americans in North America are active in the [Presbyterian Cursillo Movement](#) (some of you may know what that means – only a month or so ago we had an organizing meeting of this movement in our church).

Summary 3 – *and coming attractions!*

What's it all about? – What's it all mean?

I. Introductions

II. Presbyterian Ethos

III. A little Presbyterian history

IV. Introduction to polity – the Constitution: Part 1 Part 2

V. Entities/agencies of the Presbyterian Church

VI. Terms and acronyms we know and love

VII. Questions, comments, **quiz – final exam!**

In the next few minutes, we will explore these topics together.

But let's take a 15-minute break, and check that email, first.

See you back at: