

# Where Were You In '82?

4<sup>th</sup> 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!

Again, 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
- **What has the Reunion done for us?**
- And what do we believe ... now?
- Where are we going?

As you now know, in this six week experience, we are exploring these subjects together.

How many of you have noticed that this menu changes week to week?

Today we look more deeply into the results of the reunion as we explore: "Where were you in '82?"

## Last 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's organization.

(but, we didn't finish)

Remember, we covered most of this last Sunday ...

But not all. So you ushers and choir members, here is what you missed – and what we didn't get into with all of our personal tales last week.

## Equipping the Saints ...

- November 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 – 8:30am to 3:30pm
- First Presbyterian Church – Las Vegas!
- The Reverend Karl Travis, Guest Speaker, GA Council committee chair:

### **How To Integrate Generational Theory Into Leadership Formation**

- Plus -- five afternoon workshops!

But first – let me correct some bad info on the Equipping event this year.

Should be easy to find.

# This Sunday ...

**What has the Reunion done for us?**

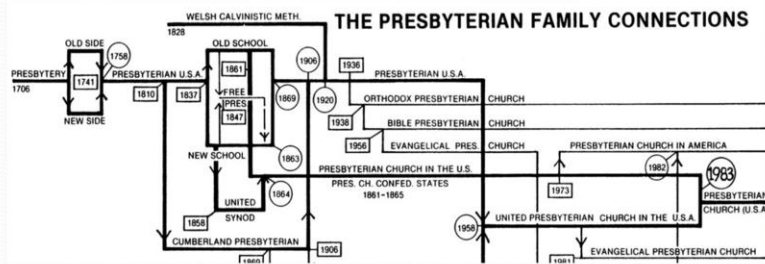
**What has the Reunion done *to* us?**

So to today's subject –

(read slide)

Understanding the responses to these questions, requires again some historical perspective.

# The Sweep of Things ...



**First Great Awakening  
1720-1750**

So -- back to the “worms chart” – first to see how the big sweeps in American religious movement affected American Presbyterianism.

As [Wikipedia](#) tells it:

## First Great Awakening

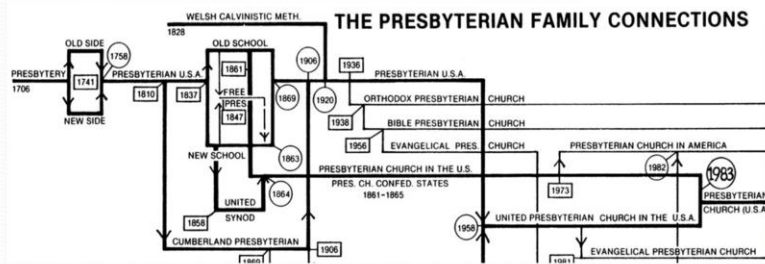
The First Great Awakening began in 1720 and lasted to about 1750. Ministers from various evangelical Protestant denominations supported the Great Awakening. Additionally, pastoral styles began to change. In the late colonial period, most pastors read their sermons, which were theologically dense and 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

## 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.

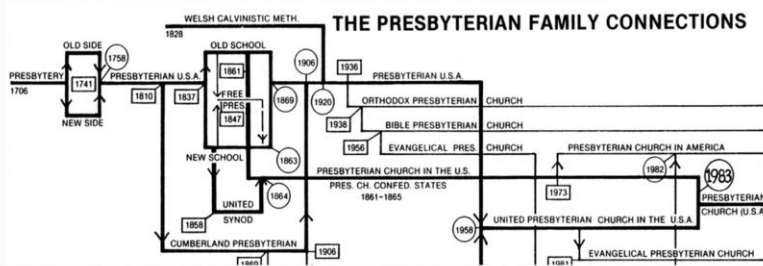
The Presbyterians contributed here, and again divided (New School / Old School). Not shown on our worms chart, in 1803 Barton Stone and others withdrew from the Kentucky Presbytery and formed the Springfield Presbytery and withdrew from Presbyterianism, their intention to be solely part of the body of 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.

# The Sweep of Things ...



**First Great Awakening**  
1720-1750

**Second Great Awakening**  
1800-1870s

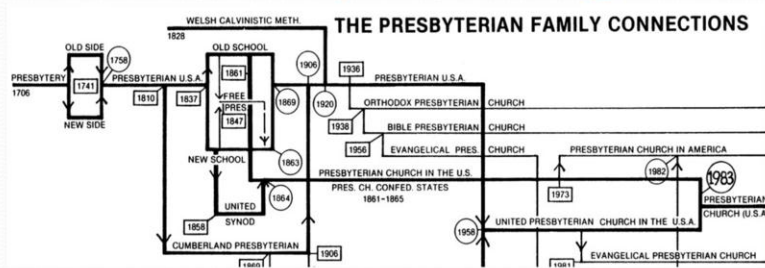
**Third Great Awakening**  
1880-1910

## 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).

For Presbyterians, this controversy reached a head in 1924 after the General Assembly of the PCUSA adopted five "essential and necessary" pillars of Christian belief. 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.

# The Sweep of Things ...



**First Great Awakening**  
1720-1750

**Second Great Awakening**  
1800-1870s

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1880-1910

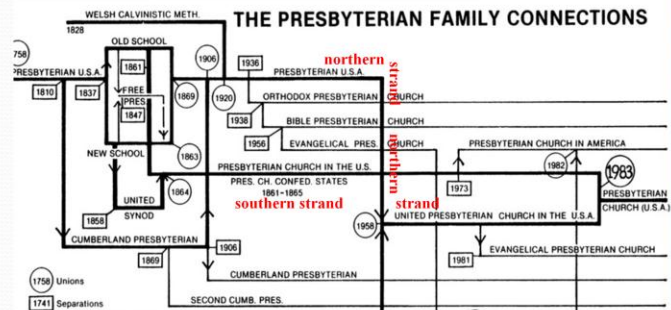
**Fourth "Great Awakening"**  
1960s – 70s

## Fourth "Great Awakening"

The Fourth "Great Awakening" is a debated concept that has not received the general academic acceptance of the first three. Advocates such as economist Robert Fogel say it happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time the "mainline" Protestant denominations weakened sharply in both membership and influence while the most conservative religious denominations (such as the Southern Baptists and Missouri Synod Lutherans) grew rapidly in numbers, spread across the United States, had grave internal theological battles and schisms, and became politically powerful. These organizations still stand today.

There is no consensus on whether a fourth awakening has actually taken place.

# Splits in the run-up



Missionary work (foreign and domestic),  
Prohibition of alcohol  
Women in politics (suffrage)  
The specter of communism  
Civil rights  
“Just war” debate  
Refugees

In the run-up to the 1983 reunion (which starts with the split resulting from the Civil War), the great religious revivals were behind the Presbyterians and not to return to the American scene. From the Civil War on, church activism shifted from revival to missionary work (foreign and domestic), prohibition (beginning the late 1800s), women in politics (suffrage, same period), the 1930s-60s specter of communism, civil rights in the 60s, participation in war / “just war” debate through the 70s, and by the 1980s, refugee settlement after Viet Nam.

In general, during the early years of the 19th century American expansion westward, the church carried on revivals and organized congregations, presbyteries, and synods wherever pastors and lay people went, emphasizing the theologically connectional nature of the church. Presbyterians also helped to shape voluntary societies within and beyond the denomination that encouraged educational, missionary, evangelical, and reforming work. As the church began to realize that the functions of the external societies were really corporate in nature and as the century proceeded, it formed its own boards and agencies to address these needs at home and abroad. Mission to Native Americans, African Americans, and populations all over the world became a hallmark of the church.

The 19th century was also characterized by disagreement and division over theology, governance, and civil reform - particularly slavery.

And that brought the start of these run-up splits ...

When the country could not reconcile the issue of slavery and the federal union, the **southern** Presbyterians split from the original PCUSA (itself in the midst of its New-School / Old School split!), forming the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in 1861, which became the Presbyterian Church in the United States after the American Civil War. Issues in the split: Slavery and abolition, of course; but also a northerner (PCUSA) demand of sworn fidelity to the USA. There were also undertones of the power emphases in polity, and the appropriateness of church participation in social justice and political activism.

Later – in the southern strand, a conservative group broke away from the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1973, mainly over the issues of women's ordination and a perceived drift toward theological liberalism. This group formed the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

So, on the chart --

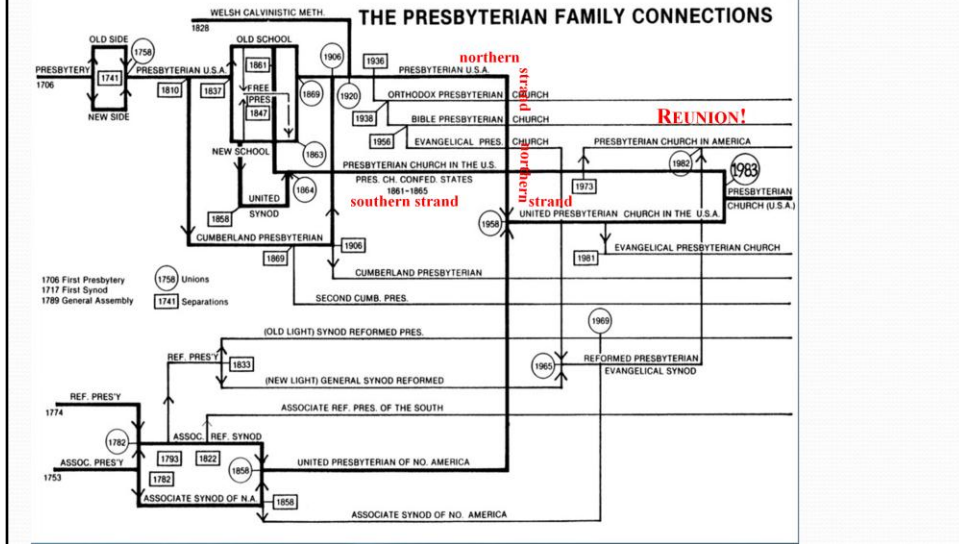
#### **Southern Strand:**

- The Civil War split the PCUSA along political/geographic lines – even in the midst of the theological split between the New and Old School! Sort of a split-squared, it resulted in four churches!
- Much later, the conservatives split off to become the PCA - as the denomination became “too progressive” on the civil issues of the day and the church’s involvement with them [1973].

#### **Northern Strand:**

- OPC/BPC/EPC split out [1936/1938/1956] result the heresy trial of the conservative Independent Foreign Missions Board – both marking and moving the rest of the PCUSA toward a more middle / liberal stance.
- Conservatives again split off to become the EPC [1981] as this name had been abandoned with the union of the older EPC with the General Synod Reformed (1965) – again driving the Northern strand more toward the middle / liberal position and probably also encouraging reunion!

# Reunions in the run-up



Now let's turn to the reunions during the run-up from after the Civil War.

The New School and Old School in the north having quickly reunited, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was joined by the majority of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, mostly congregations in the border and Southern states, in 1906 and in 1920, it absorbed the Welsh Calvinist Methodist Church.

The United Presbyterian Church of North America (from a whole other stream of Presbyterian witness) merged with the PCUSA in 1958 to form the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA).

Here is the run-up:

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

An attempt to reunite the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. with the

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

Attempts at union between these churches were renewed in the 1970s, culminating in their merger to form on June 10, 1983 – and finally reuniting [Presbyterian Church in the United States](#), whose churches were located in the [Southern](#) and [border states](#), with the [United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America](#), whose congregations could be found in every state. The second north-south reunion. A new national headquarters was established in Louisville, Kentucky in 1988 within a short time, replacing the headquarters of the UPCUSA in New York City and the PCUS located in Atlanta, Georgia – not an easy merge, all of the New York and deep south stereotypes were fully in play.

On the chart --

#### **Southern Strand:**

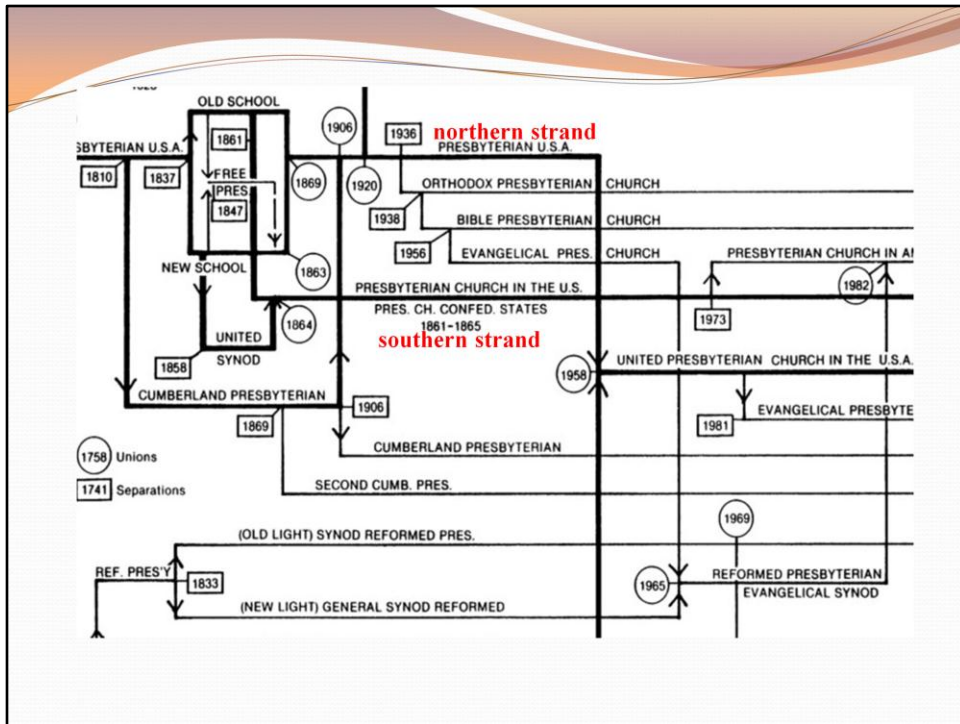
- New School / Old School elements reunited in the South during the war [1864]
- (Again - the 1973 conservative split out from the PCUS to become the PCA probably actually encouraged the PCUS/UPCUSA reunion!)

#### **Northern Strand:**

- New School / Old School reunion (1869) – re-forms the PCUSA
- PCUSA/Cumberland reunion (1908)
- Union with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists (1920)
- (The OPC/BPC/EPC split out [1936/1938/1956] removed many conservatives from the PCUSA and also probably actually encouraged the later PCUS/UPCUSA reunion!)
- PCUSA / UPNA / PCUS – talks in the 1950s led to PCUSA / UPNA union (1958) – the PCUS was then still edgy about polity emphases (where is the power – GA or Presbytery?), and the appropriateness of the church's participation in social justice and political activism – but moving toward the North's positions on social activism
- The conservative split off to become the EPC [1981] – again drove the

Northern strand toward the middle / liberal position and also probably encouraging reunion!





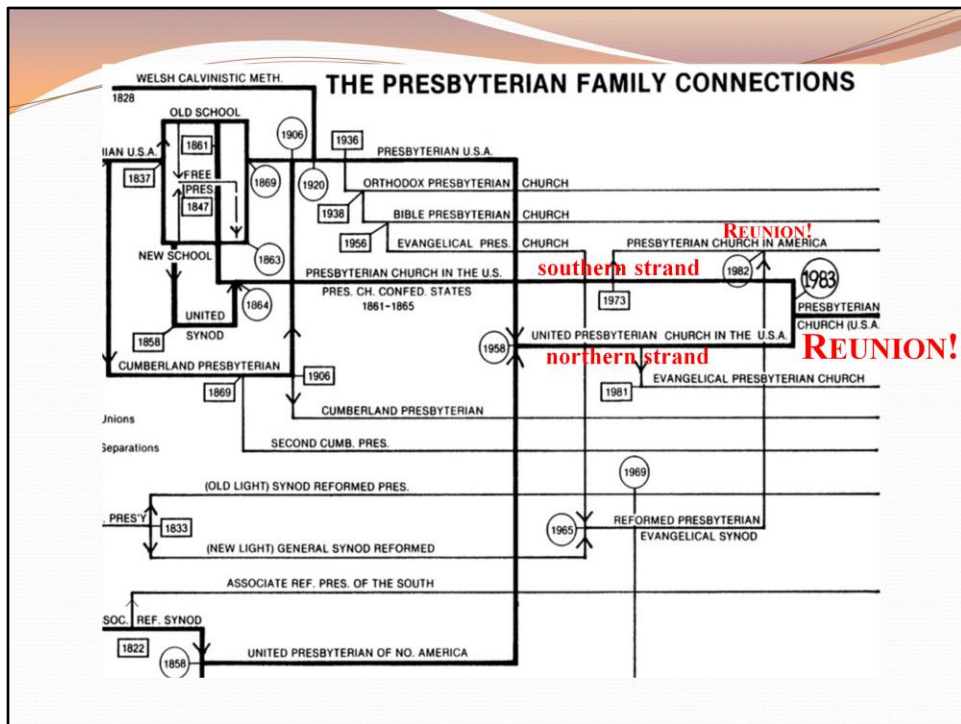
## The plot thickens!

Talks had actually been going on since the end of the civil War – but many splits and joins had intervened the status of churches at that war’s end – eh? Well, here is another -- out of left field!

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

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





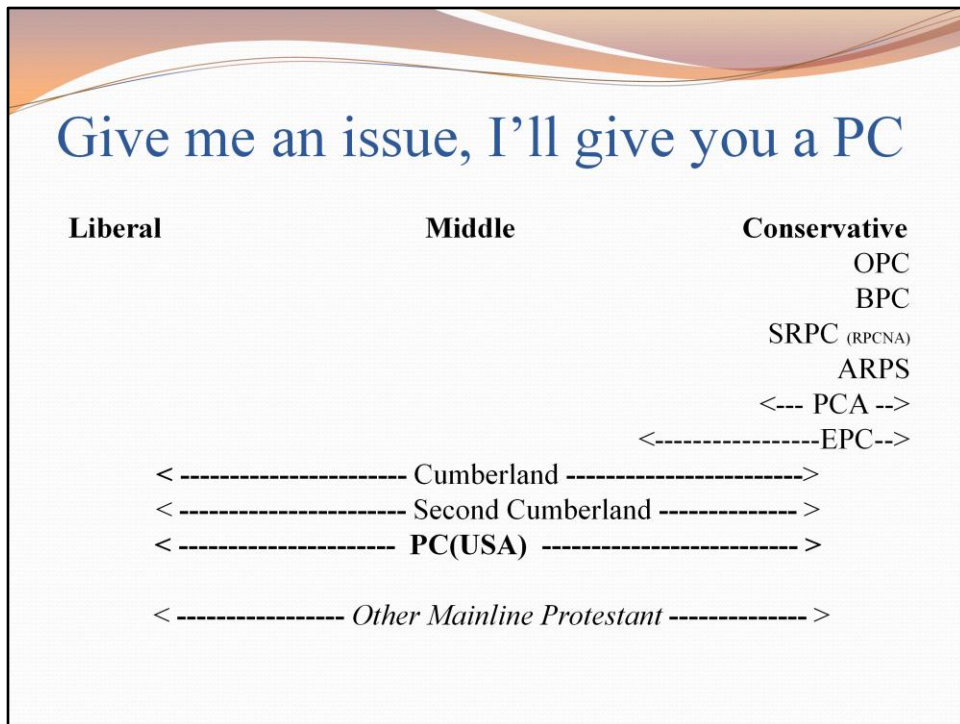
Which finally gets us to the second north-south reunion – about 120 years after the original split at the time of the Civil War.

At the time of this merger, these churches had a combined membership of 3,121,238.

A new national headquarters was established in [Louisville, Kentucky](#) in 1988 replacing the headquarters of the UPCUSA in [New York City](#) and the PCUS located in [Atlanta, Georgia](#). It took years to finally effect this reunion down through the synod, presbytery and congregational levels – some may not even be “there” yet!

Let’s pay some attention to the nine continuing American Presbyterian denominations at the right side of the chart. (There actually are a few more, but these are the ones that the PCUSA puts on their worms chart.)

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.



Here is where 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, and conservative politics.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 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 strand of the “1706 presbytery” heritage before the 1983 reunion happened for the same reasons as the other conservative churches had from the northern strand – 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 the “1706 presbytery” heritage northern strand. 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 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 came out way back – right 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 on the Westminster Confession. It has a socially progressive tradition – the first to train and ordain women to leadership roles in the church. 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 do elect women as Elders.

In a nutshell (now there is an apt simile), the northern strand / southern strand merger in 1983 essentially consolidated the moderate-to-liberal American Presbyterians of the “1706 presbytery” heritage 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.



## PC(USA) in action

- **Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy**

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How does your church speak out on social issues?



# PC(USA) in action

- Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy

Ministry in the **prophetic role**

- Nevada Presbytery Social Witness – Evident from its history



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

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

## **Ministry outside of the church**

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

## **Ministry to the world**

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

ecumenical event in 1913.

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

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

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

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

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

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

legislature on social concerns in 1996.

How has your Presbytery spoken out?

## PC(USA) in action

- **Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy**

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



Address social justice with the state legislature and the public:

Children and Family  
Health Care  
Criminal Justice  
Funding Social Programs  
Other

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

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

### Children and Family Issues:

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

### Criminal Justice Issues:

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

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

Health Care Issues:

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

Funding Social Programs:

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

Other Concerns:

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

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

## PC(USA) in action

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

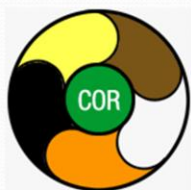
prophets give specific warning to those who seek only their own well-being and ignore the well-being of the marginalized and oppressed. Israel's failure to be just and righteous is clearly seen as disobedient to God and the reason for national decay and destruction.

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

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

## PC(USA) in action

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



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

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

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

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



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

### **Responsibilities of CORs**

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

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

## PC(USA) in action

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



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

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

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

## **Formula of agreement**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **National and international ecumenical memberships**

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

## **World Communion of Reformed Churches**

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

## **Churches Uniting in Christ**

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

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

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

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

**Full members**

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

[Christian Methodist Episcopal Church](#)

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

[International Council of Community Churches](#)

[Moravian Church Northern Province](#)

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

[United Church of Christ](#)

[United Methodist Church](#)

**Former members**

[African Methodist Episcopal Church](#)

[African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church](#)

**Partners in mission and dialogue**

[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

# Current controversies

GA speaks *to* the denomination – not *for* the denomination

- Homosexual ordination
- Scriptural interpretation and authority
- Property ownership
- Divestment from corporations operating in Israel
- Revision of Interfaith Relations resource on church anti-Jewish bias in materials related to Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Etc., Etc.. Etc.

Here are a few of the modern controversies within our church, many of which you recall from Sharron's sides last week ...

## Homosexual ordination

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is currently struggling with the issue of Biblical interpretation and faithfulness, particularly as it relates to homosexuality. Many Presbyterian scholars, pastors, and theologians have been heavily involved in the debate over homosexuality.

Since 1980, the More Light Churches Network has served many congregations and individuals within American Presbyterianism who take positions on one side of this issue. The Covenant Network of Presbyterians was formed in 1997 to support repeal of "Amendment B", and to encourage networking amongst like-minded clergy and congregations. Other organizations of Presbyterians, such as the Confessing Movement and the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, have also organized on the other side of the issue to support maintaining the current standards of ordination.

## General Assembly 2006

The 2006 *Report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church*, in theory, attempted to find common ground. Some felt that the adoption of this report provided for a clear local option mentioned, while the Stated Clerk of the

General Assembly, Clifton Kirkpatrick went on record as saying, "Our standards have not changed. The rules of the Book of Order stay in force and all ordinations are still subject to review by higher governing bodies." The authors of the report stated that it is a compromise and return to the original Presbyterian culture of local controls. The recommendation for more control by local presbyteries and sessions is viewed by its opposition as a method for bypassing the constitutional restrictions currently in place concerning ordination and marriage, effectively making the constitutional "standard" entirely subjective.

In the General Assembly gathering of June 2006, the Commissioners passed an "authoritative interpretation" of the *Book of Order* (the church constitution) which had been recommended by the Theological Task Force. Some argued that this gave presbyteries the "local option" of ordaining or not ordaining anyone based on a particular presbytery's reading of the constitutional statute. Others argued that presbyteries have always had this responsibility and that this new ruling did not change but only clarified that responsibility. On June 20, 2006, the General Assembly voted 298 to 221 (or 57% to 43%) to approve such interpretation – but in that same session on June 20, the General Assembly also voted 405 to 92 (with 4 abstentions) to uphold the constitutional standard for ordination requiring fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness. A clear understanding of the effect of what the General Assembly voted upon in 2006 may have to wait until the ecclesiastical courts make decisions on specific cases.

### **General Assembly 2008**

The General Assembly of 2008 took several actions related to homosexuality. The first action was to adopt a different translation of the Heidelberg Catechism from 1962, removing the words "homosexual perversions" among other changes. This will require the approval of the 2010 and 2012 General Assemblies as well as the votes of the presbyteries after the 2010 Assembly. The second action was to approve a new Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order* allowing for the ordaining body to make decisions on whether or not a departure from the standards of belief or practice is sufficient to preclude ordination. Some argue that this creates "local option" on ordaining homosexual persons. The third action was to replace the text of "Amendment B" with new text: "Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate's sincere efforts to adhere to these standards." This would have removed the "fidelity and chastity" clause. This third

action failed to obtain the required approval of a majority of the presbyteries by June, 2009. Fourth, a resolution was adopted to affirm the definition of marriage from Scripture and the Confessions as being between a man and a woman.

### **General Assembly 2010**

On July 8, 2010, by a vote of **373 to 323**, the General Assembly voted to propose to the presbyteries a constitutional amendment to remove the restriction against the ordination of partnered homosexuals. This action required ratification by a majority of the 173 presbyteries within 12 months for the proposed amendment to take effect. As noted above, The presbyteries voted to approve the constitutional change.

At the General Assembly of 2004 an overture to consider adoption of the **Belhar Confession** was adopted. That confession was written by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in response to apartheid. The 2008 General Assembly voted to create a committee to study the confession and bring a recommendation to the 2010 General Assembly – which sent it to the Presbyteries where it was not affirmed.

### **Property ownership**

In the event of a congregational split, dissolution (closing), or disassociation from the PC(USA), the presbytery may assert a claim to the property. State law (which varies) determines the ownership of property despite the denomination's property clause in the *Book of Order*. This clause does not prevent particular churches from leaving the denomination, but if they do, they may not be entitled to any physical assets of that congregation unless by agreement with the presbytery. Recently this provision has been vigorously tested in courts of law.

### **Divestment from corporations operating in Israel**

In June 2004, the General Assembly met in Richmond, Virginia and adopted by a vote of 431-62 a resolution that called on the church's committee on Mission Responsibility through Investment "to initiate a process of phased, selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel." The resolution also said "the occupation . . . has proven to be at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict." The church statement at the time noted that "divestment is one of the strategies that U.S. churches used in the 1970s and 80s in a successful campaign to end apartheid in South Africa." A second resolution, calling for an end to the construction of a wall by the state of Israel, also passed.

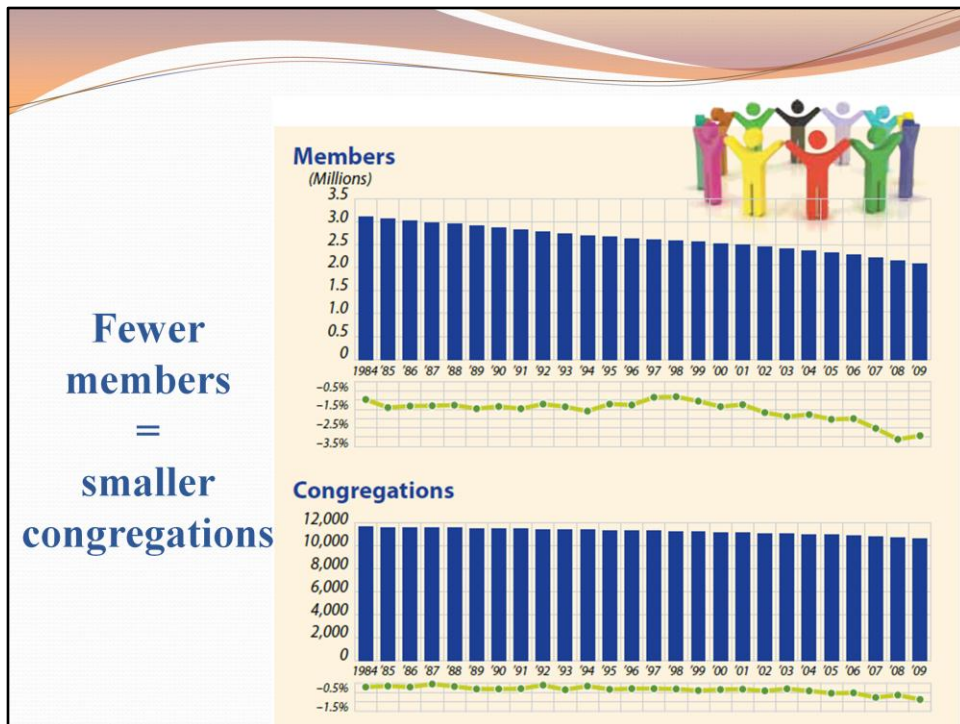
### **Revision of Interfaith Relations resource on church anti-Jewish bias in materials related to Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

In May 2008, the denomination's Office of Interfaith Relations issued a statement



titled "Vigilance against anti-Jewish ideas and bias." This statement reported that "strains of an old anti-Jewish tradition are present in the way we ourselves sometimes speak and in the rhetoric and ideas of some writers that we may read" regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Church revised and expanded this document in June, removing acknowledgment of such sentiment as a matter of current church practice, instead declaring that the church's current stands are not anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish - in part because they reflect criticisms of Israel meted by Jews and Israelis. The revisions resulted in a rebuke from the major Jewish denominations in a June 13, 2008 letter to the head of the PCUSA and a similar condemnation in the form of a statement from the denominations and ten other organizations.

So it goes – engaging the world is not so pretty.



Here are some sobering statistics about our church from Jack Marcum, *coordinator of Research Services, GAMC (PCUSA Research Services: [Fewer members = smaller congregations](#))* ...

Both the number of members and the number of congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have decreased over time, but at very different rates:

- In 2009 there were 10,657 congregations, a net drop of 1,005 (9 percent) from the 11,662 in existence at the denomination's founding in 1983.
- New congregations were added in each of the last 26 years, but in every year more were lost; the annual net loss averages 36.
- In relative terms, the average annual net loss in congregations has been 0.30 percent, with a low of 0.04 percent (1987) and a high of 0.88 percent (2009).
- Over the same period, more members were lost than gained in every year, falling from 3,131,228 to 2,077,158, a decline of more than one million (34 percent).
- The net loss in members averages 40,541 per year.
- In relative terms, membership has dropped an average of 1.5 percent annually, ranging from 0.8 percent (1998) to 3.1 percent (2008).

**What the research shows** -- The key difference in these trends is not direction but magnitude, Jack notes.

The numbers of both congregations and members have fallen steadily since 1983, but members have dropped at almost four times the rate of congregations. As a result, the typical congregation's size has dropped dramatically, from an average of 268 members and a median of 195 in 1983 to 152 and 97, respectively, in 2009. Over the same period, the share of congregations with 100 or fewer members increased from 36 percent to 51 percent.

Several consequences have ensued:

- Many congregations have larger facilities than they need and fewer resources for upkeep. (To bring it home -- is the situation for FPC?)
- Others can no longer afford a pastoral leader. (Is the situation for Summerlin?)
- More congregations in 2009 had no pastoral leadership of any sort (2,231) than was true just four years before (2,050).

Even so, when net membership losses began *in the 1960s*, no one set out to use this trend to reduce the size of most congregations. It just happened—the result of efforts, presbytery by presbytery and congregation by congregation, to keep the doors open. The unintentional shift to smaller congregations requires an intentional response.

The use of commissioned lay pastors is a major step already in place.

More programs and resources tailored to the circumstances—and budgets—of smaller congregations would be another. After all, as the trend line of membership shows, there will likely be more rather than fewer such congregations in the near future –

Indeed, with these rates projected, there will be no PCUSA in 2041 -- **if we, as churches – and as a denomination -- do not change what we are doing!**



- Replacement capacity of the PC(USA)
- All of the mainline churches are declining in membership – a cultural thing
- Loss related to level of internal controversy
- Loss attribution ratio:
  - Replacement capacity – **17%**
  - Cultural loss – **33%**
  - Controversy – **50%**

From: <http://blog.gajunkie.com/2011/04/18/whither-the-pcusa-with-the-pcusa.aspx?ref=rss>

8Oct2011

### **Whither The PC(USA)? Wither The PC(USA)?**

Posted by Steve Salyards at [4/18/2011 6:01 PM](#)

#### ***What does this mean?***

Steve Salyards , the GA Junkie blogger notes recently: ... I have been thinking ... in the larger context of the history of American Presbyterianism and what the church might look like in the near future. So here is a back of the envelope calculation ...[about] ... why the denomination is losing members.

If we look at the [summary of comparative statistics for 2009](#), the most recent year that is available, we can first make a rough estimate of the replacement capacity of the PC(USA).

In 2009 there were 20,501 individuals age 17 and under that joined the church by affirmation of faith. This is effectively the "internal gain," that is the kids that come through the system from member families. This represents a 1.0% membership gain for 2009. This is offset by those that leave the rolls due to their new membership in

the Church Triumphant, that is, those that have died. For 2009 that was 32,827 or a loss of 1.5% of the membership. So the net of -0.5% represents the church's inability to replace its membership internally.

The other thing is that all of the mainline churches are declining in membership. But within this decline there is a difference in the rates of decline relative to the strength of internal controversy in the churches.

For the six traditional "mainline" denominations that make the [National Council of Churches 25 largest](#) list,

- the less contentious United Methodist Church and American Baptist Churches in the USA declined by 1.01% and 1.55% respectively.

The three with more heated internal controversy had larger declines:

- the PC(USA) declined 2.61%,
- the Episcopal Church declined 2.48%, and
- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America declined 1.96%.

It would suggest that we could attribute at least 1%, and probably a bit more, of the PC(USA)'s decline to the internal controversy itself. But that is only about half the total decline with the other half broken into about one-third the lack of internal replacement and about two-thirds the general decline in the mainline and the trend towards non-denominationalism.

Now the case can be made that these three factors are nothing more than different facets of the same general problem that the mainline faces -- a younger generation shuns the "institutional" nature of the church with its continuing controversies in a hierarchical setting and their departure for the non-denominational or the "nones" raises the median age and decreases the birthrate. However, the apparent correlation of membership declines with internal controversy is striking but not a complete explanation.



So ...

**What has the Reunion done for us?**

- Changed the landscape of American Presbyterianism
- Created the largest Presbyterian denomination
- Created a “Big Tent” for a broad Presbyterian witness

**What has the Reunion done *to* us?**

- Continuous internal debate
- Decline in membership – reasons
- Confusion over who and what we are / what we believe

Absorb slide.

## Equipping the Saints ...

- November 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 – 8:30am to 3:30pm
- First Presbyterian Church – Las Vegas!
- The Reverend Karl Travis, Guest Speaker, GA Council committee chair:

### **How To Integrate Generational Theory Into Leadership Formation**

- Plus -- five afternoon workshops!

Don't forget!

## 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
- What has the Reunion done for us?
- **And what do we believe ... now?**
- Where are we going?

And that brings us to the end of today's lesson on what the Reunion has done – ready for the test?

Next week we will delve into what we confess to believe as a denomination – at least as of today!

See you then?

Let's close in prayer.