

# Polity - Presbytery, Synod, and GA - Oh my!

Facilitated by Elder Art Ritter,  
First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas

Grace and Peace to you from the Presbytery of Nevada, Equipping the Saints Committee – and WELCOME!

I am Art Ritter and I will be facilitating this workshop on polity – in the Presbyterian Church USA.

This workshop is produced for the purpose of teaching, preparing, and informing its presbyters about our polity -- and -- the three major issues referred to the presbytery by the General Assembly of the PCUSA for vote in our next presbytery meeting.

## What did we get ourselves into here?

- What is “polity” ... anyway?
- What does it do for me and my church?
- What changes are coming to what I just learned?
  - A new Form of Government format (in the Book of Order)
  - An addition to our Book of Confessions – the Belhar Confession – and ...
  - 15 content changes and additions to our Book of Order

I suppose that even by now, some may be questioning their judgment about coming today ...

Well, I hope it won't be that bad!

Today, we will find an overview of what polity is – and how it helps us to do what we do as a church. Then we will address the three proposals for change.

Although we will not argue them (or even get into their content very much), we will spend some time on how we should study them – so that we can address them as a presbytery - “decently and in order.”

I hope that you will find this *informative* (whether you are “into this sort of thing” or not) and *instructive* – especially if you have some part to play in the process.

## Introductions ...

- **Arthur Ritter**, First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas
  - Elder and Deacon, Clerk of Session, Treasurer of the Board of Deacons
  - FPC, LV Commissioner to the Nevada Presbytery
  - Member, Committee on Preparation for Ministry
  - Vice Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada,
  - NV Presbytery Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific.
  - Member, Synod's Mission Personnel Committee.
  - Polity (business model) wonk – in real life, too.
- And you? ...

Here is who I am and my association with the subject of polity.

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

Can we take a few minutes to see what experience there is in the room with us today?

In the Equipping the Saints workshop audience, November 6, all were elders (session experience) or ministers (presbytery experience). Two had extensive presbytery / committee experience – and one had (synod) judicial commission experience. One had been to 9 General Assembly meetings, including 2010 – as an observer / allied ministry member.

(Have each introduce themselves and note how they have served the greater church in governance positions.)

Well, we see that there is a bit of attachment to polity in the room! So, let's dive right in ...

## Polity

**“God works through His people”**

... it is how we govern what we do.

... it is how we organize, order, manage, and lead human effort to:

- *accomplish the mission of the Church and*
- *achieve the vision of the Church*

First off, what is **polity**? -- and --

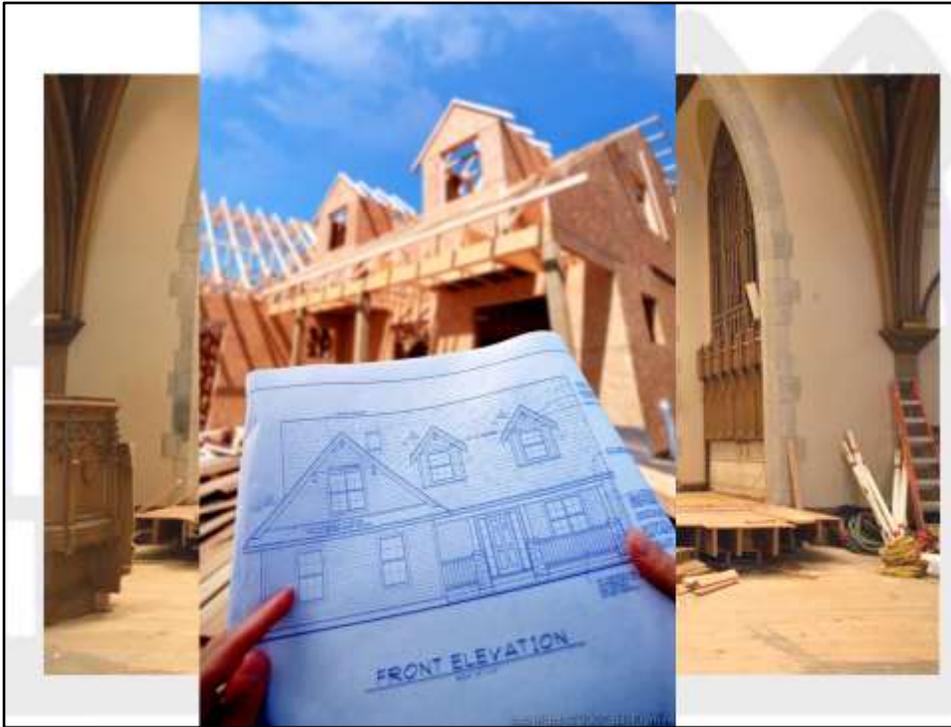
What is the role of polity in the life of the Church?

(Pause to allow the room to read the slide)

Well, **polity** is not the work of the Church;

... participating in the mission of God is the work of the Church.

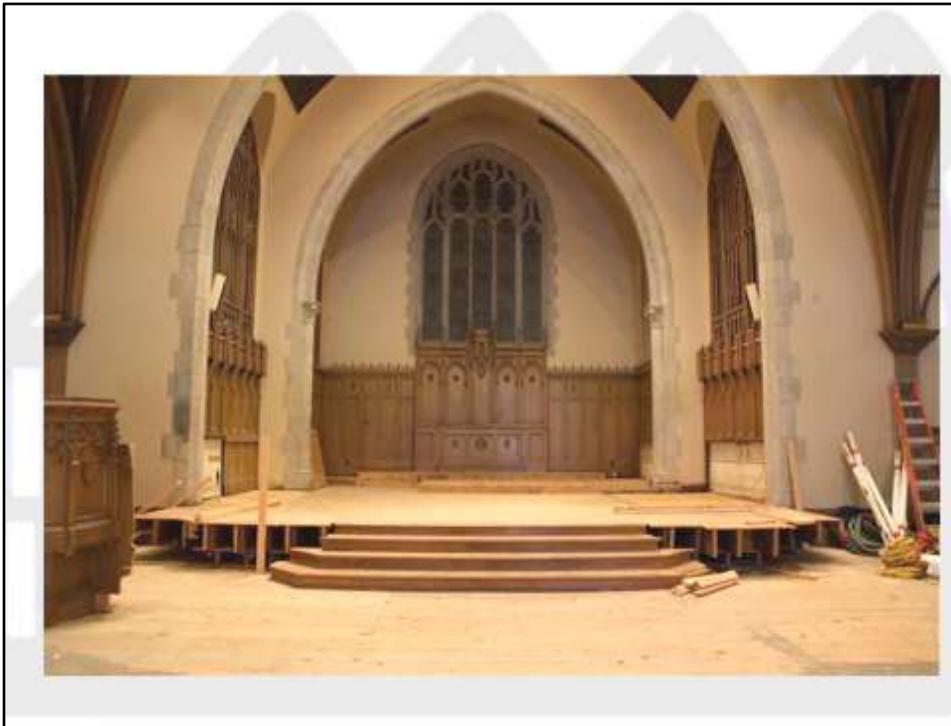
Here is how The Form of Government Task Force (who proposed the change we will consider in a while) looks at “polity” ...



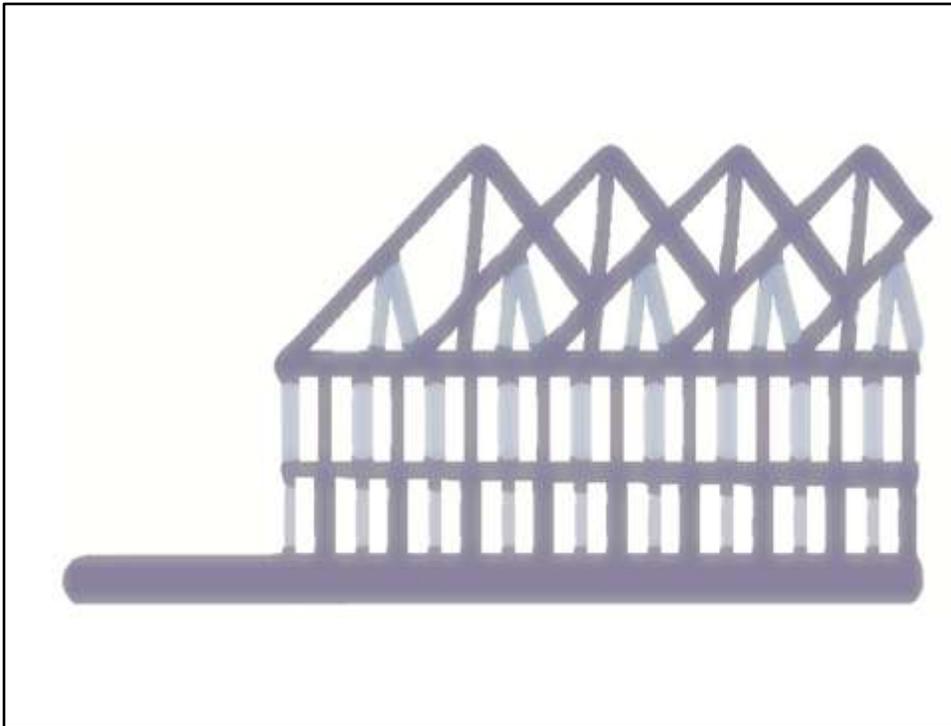
The New Form Of Government Task Force defines **polity** for us with this analogy.

- **Polity** is a **plan** - for building a church...
  - *In which to serve God*
- and
- *from which to participate in God's mission in the world.*

It is, if you will, a blueprint for the church's organization – and operation.



- Just as a blueprint is a plan for building a house in which to live and work ...
- **Polity** is the *architecture of mission*.



Like any good blueprint, a **polity** ...

*specifies the dimensions of the theological foundations upon which our polity rests,*

*the height of our ecclesiastical walls, and*

*the pitch of our covenantal roof ...*

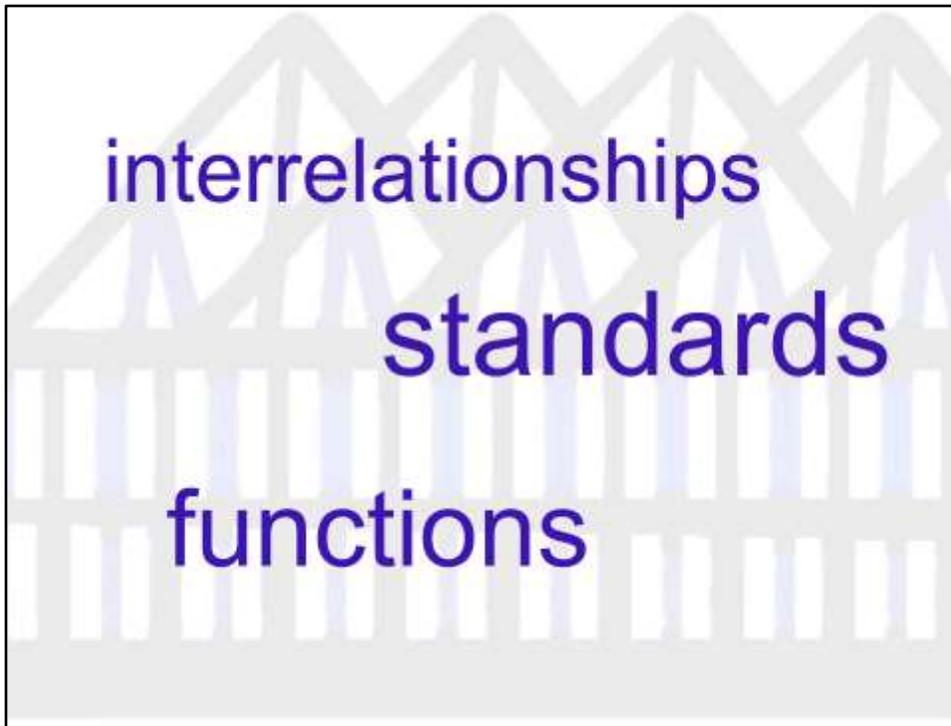


But it doesn't tell us anything about the arrangement of the furniture in the room, or what pictures hang on the walls!

Those decisions are left to the ones who will live in the house – or worship in the sanctuary. Making them is what helps turn

a **house** into a **home**,

a **church building** into a **faith community**.



It's the same with the relationship between polity and the practice of the life of the church. **Polity** ...

- \* describes the **interrelationships** between the parts of the church,
- \* sets out the **standards** by which the church measures its ministry,
- \* and outlines the **functions** necessary to being the church.

But it should leave to individual councils the decisions about –

what processes best meet those standards and

what structures best accomplish those functions.

To put it succinctly,

**a polity should mandate –**

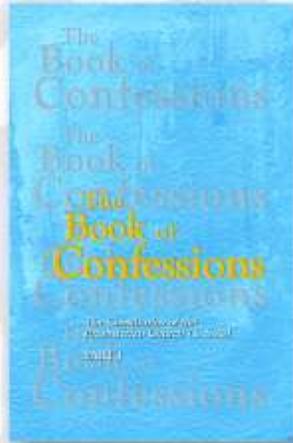
**standards not processes,**

**functions, not structures.**

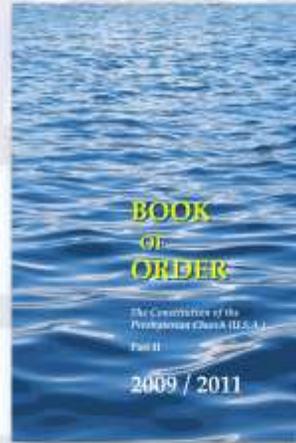
# The PC(USA) Constitution

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## Part One



## Part Two



The PC(USA) Constitution is our current denominational **polity** -- and your local governance documents (your local **polity**) reflect it extensively.

Our denominational Constitution consists of two parts:

**Part One is The Book of Confessions**, the theological polity part – describing what the church believes on particular issues.

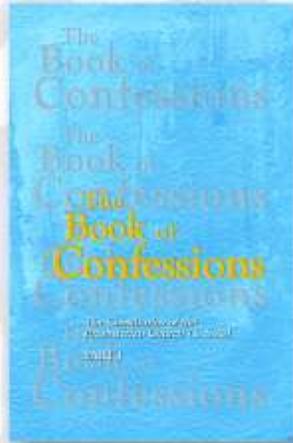
**Part Two is the Book of Order** is the practical polity part – describing the standards (and processes) of  
how we govern,  
how we worship, and  
how we enforce our polity.

Specifically ...

# The PC(USA) Constitution

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Part One



The  
Apostles  
Creed

...

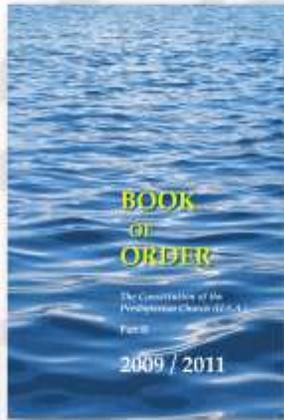
A Brief  
Statement  
of Faith

**The Book of Confessions**, the theological polity part – is a collection of eleven creeds, confessions, and statements that define our theological heritage as Reformed and Presbyterian Christians.

These confessions stretch from the Apostles Creed (dating to the first or second century in one form or another) – to the latest – a Brief Statement of Faith (marking the union of the two largest Presbyterian denominations in 1983).

# The PC(USA) Constitution

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Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

Our Book of Order has three parts:

The **Form of Government**, which describes our church's system of governance: interrelationships, standards and processes, and function,

The **Directory for Worship**, which provides required standards and suggested process aspects of our worship life,

And the **Rules of Discipline**, which outlines the standards and process for resolving disputes within the life of our church.



So that brings us to the question of “What is the Church?”

I suppose that when we think of – “The Church” -- some image like this springs most quickly to our mind – a building – which is not all that bad.

A building, after all, houses its function – and if it does so distinctively, it proclaims its function, as well – sometimes long after the inhabitants have left!

But how does the Bible describe the Church?



Like this? ...

Well, yes, we have read "Children of God" in there somewhere...



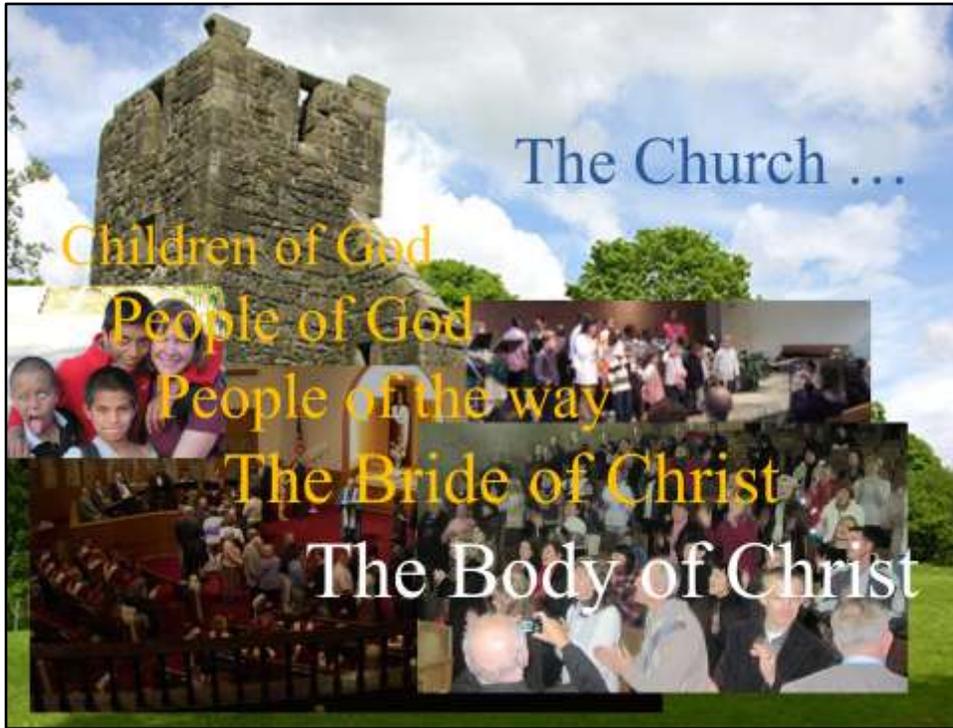
More like this?

Yes, we remember these phrases used as well ...

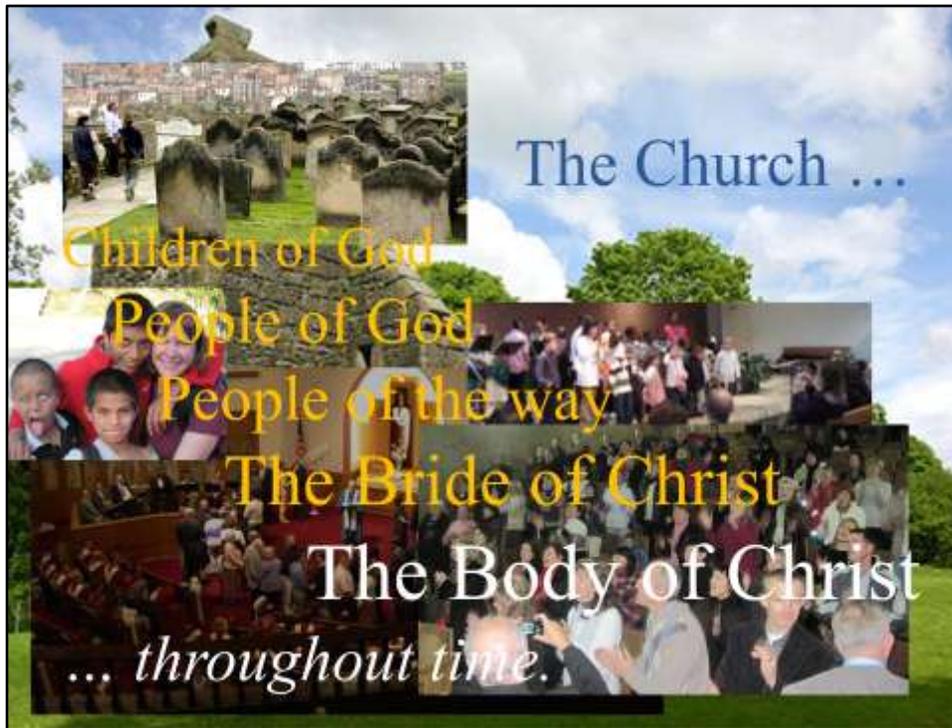


Like this?

Oh yes! The Bride of Christ is a well developed concept in the Bible ...



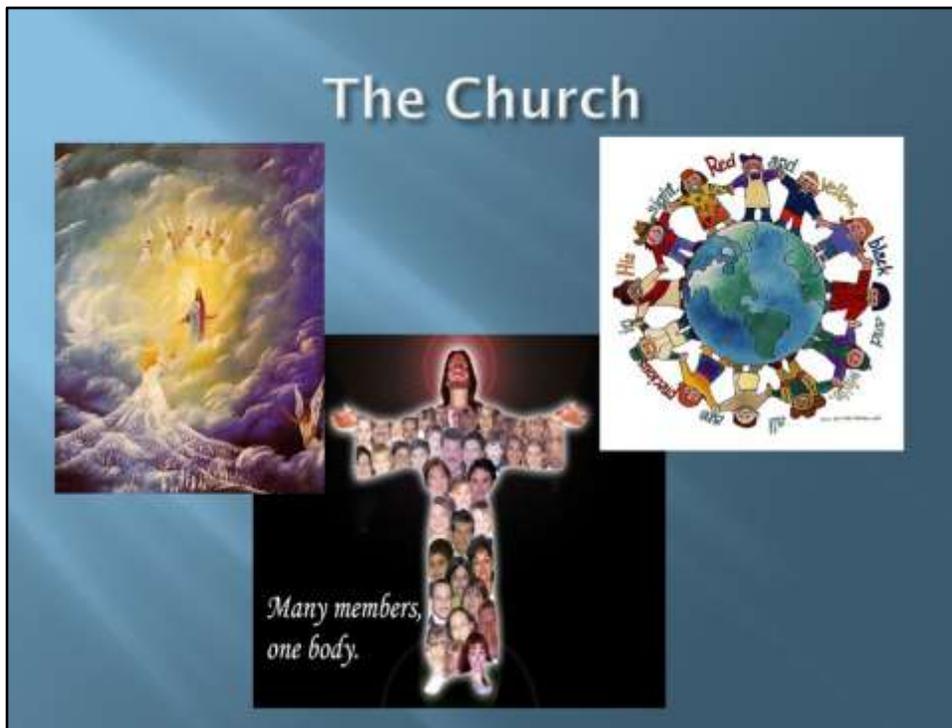
Ah, yes another well developed and favorite concept...



That is right! The Bible does refer to all saints –

So I guess ...

... all of these – and more!



The Bride...

The people ...

The Body ..

Rich imagery – and all are important to our spiritual and practical understanding of The Church.

(Notice the Bible doesn't say anything about buildings, though – its all about **people -- in a collective relationship to God.**)

But, I am a polity wonk – in real life too – and I tend to see things organizationally...

# What is the Church?

In **organizational terms**, the best short description of any organization is an integrated expression of these most fundamental statements –

“We are (**our values**) sent to (**our market**) to accomplish (**our mission**) *so that* (**God’s vision of the future**) is achieved\* by (**His goal**).”

\* By the way ... His vision **will** be achieved – this is the Church’s part in it.

I tell my clients that ... (read the slide) ...

Such a statement could be made for any type of organization (modified a bit)

... and when done so formally, the organization itself has a far better self-understanding about what its owner wants to get out of its very existence, let alone its operation – and what its members are to do and why.

I also tell my clients that making these foundational statements is the singular responsibility of the owner of the organization – who has some purpose, some objectives, something in mind to get out of the organization.

By the way, every organization can be described in this format. Done clearly and accurately, this statement will describe exactly how - and predict how well - the organization works and will work -- in terms of its owner’s purpose for it.

Formally done or not, done well or not, good or bad, clear or unclear, unified or scattered, this statement will diagnose how and whether any organization will produce what the owner wants from it.

Lets look at “The Church” ...

## We are ...

- Called out of the World
- Saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church
- Transformed by the renewing of our minds
- Conformed to the image of God
- Given gifts - for building up the body *and* for accomplishing its mission
- Witnesses to the love of God for His creation
- Accompanied by God Himself

(Read the slide)

Do these elements capture who the church is?

Could you add elements to improve this?

## ... sent to ...

- A lost and dying world
- Rebellious against God their Creator
- Imprisoned by sin
- Hungry for salvation
- Thirsting for reconciliation with their Creator

(Read the slide)

Do these elements capture who the church is sent to serve – its “market?”

Could you add elements to improve this?

## ... our **Mission**...

(what we **do**)

- **Proclaim the gospel** for the salvation of humankind;
- **Provide shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship** of the children of God;
- **Maintain (and practice) divine worship;**
- **Preserve the truth;**
- **Promote social righteousness;** and
- **Exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven** to the world

(Read the slide)

Do these elements describe what the church is sent to **do**?

Could you add elements to improve this?

## ... God's Vision

(**why** we do it – **when** we will be finished)

...*so that* at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

-- The Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian Churches 2:10-11

-- and to the Roman Churches 14:11

-- all the while, quoting God's prophet, Isaiah 45:23

(Read the slide)

Do these elements capture why the church is sent to do its mission?

Could you add elements to improve this vision?

## ... God's Vision ... His goal

(why we do it – when we will be finished)

...*so that* at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

-- The Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian Churches 2:10-11

-- and to the Roman Churches 14:11

-- all the while, quoting God's prophet, Isaiah 45:23

... on the day of His choosing.

(Read the slide)

Do we understand that although God's vision may be achieved at any time, we do not know **when** -- and that "**when**" is not our choice?

Could you add elements to improve this goal?

The fact is, only God can **make** these component statements (he owns the church) – and He has made them – in His Word.

Our job is to **discern** them – not invent them!

And not from a precious verse here or an image there – but from His whole counsel on the matter.

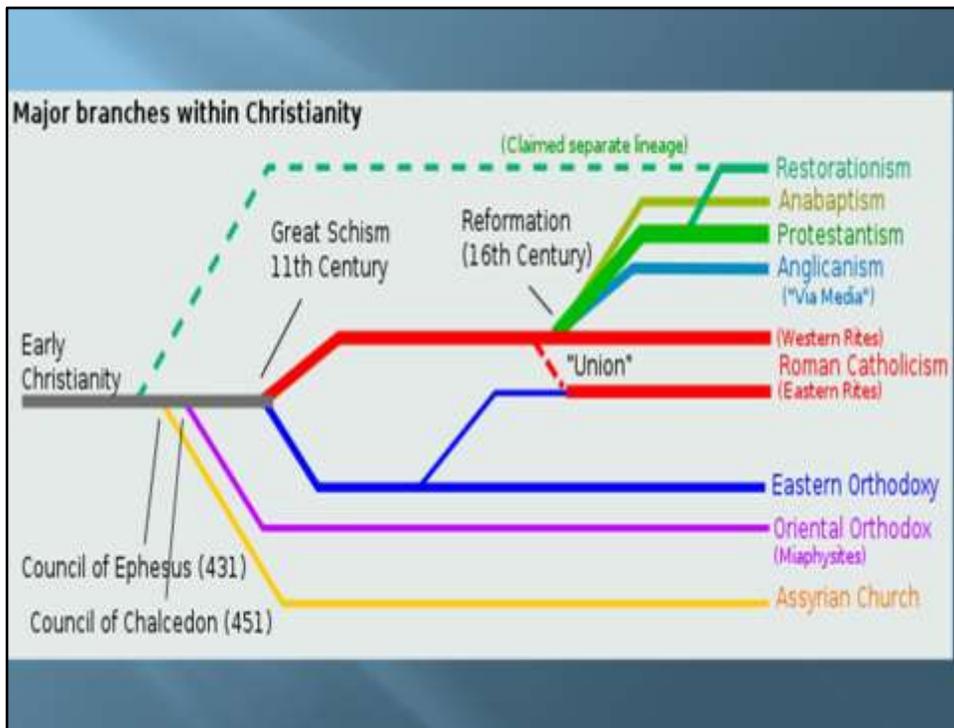
Well, if this is "The Church" – the whole Church, both visible and invisible over all time ...

So where do we fit in?



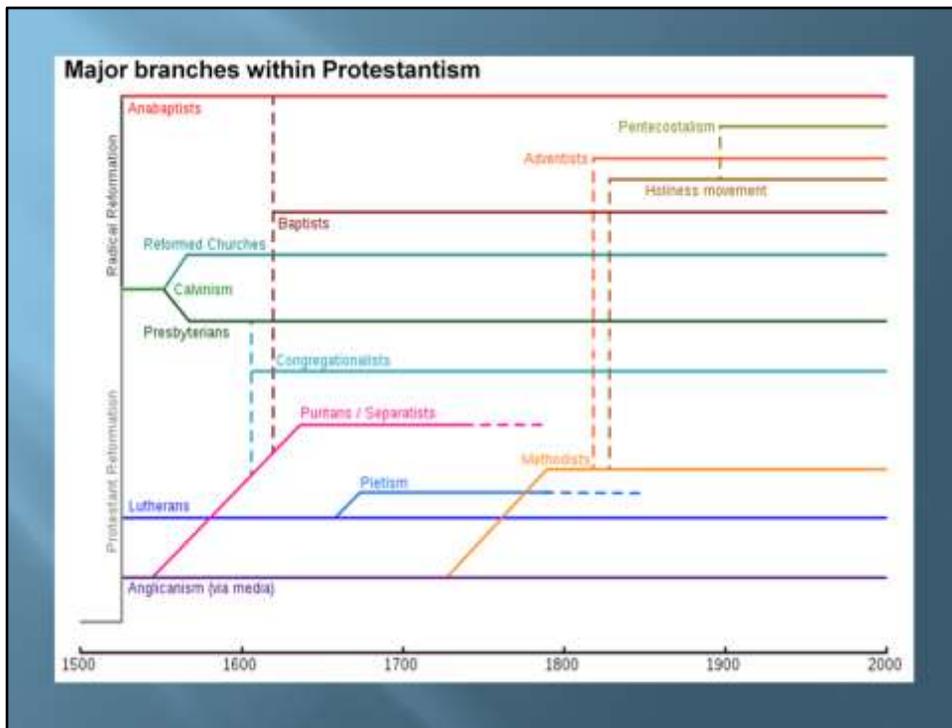
Where do we all fit in?

Well, lets have a look ...



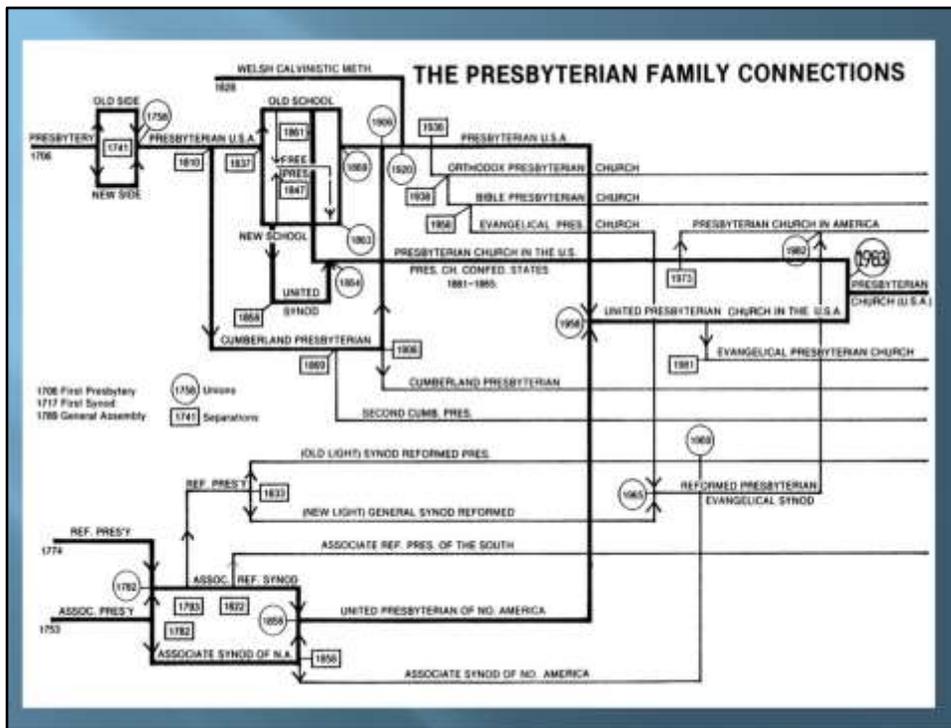
Here is the development of The Church over time ...

(Trace from left to right to "Protestantism")



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

(Trace to Presbyterianism.)



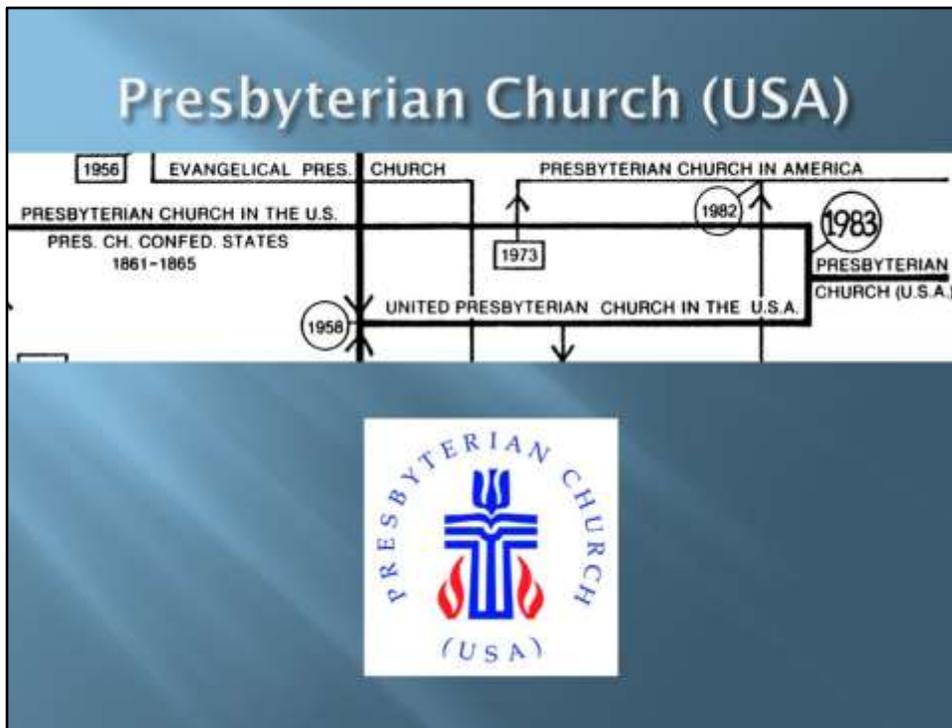
Jumping to American Presbyterianism, see here what it is that we seem to do best – split and join – re-split and re-join!

Here is an exercise –

Trace your specific heritage in the American Presbyterian witness – from your first association with a Presbyterian Church to today...

How many splits and joins are on your Presbyterian path?

Lets bring us into relatively modern American Presbyterian History –



... the 1958 join of the old northern, “Presbyterian USA” denomination (the “Poo’ sa”) and the United Presbyterian Church of North America (the “ups’-na”) to become the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (the “You’-pa-coo’-sa”).

From a polity viewpoint, we merged our constitutions at this join; but, kept both versions of the Westminster Confession (!).

And then in the 1983 joining of the You-pa-coo-sa with the old Southern Church (“the Southern Church”) to become what we are today – the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) – (“the Pea-sea you es ay” – don’t-cha know!) we merged our constitutions again!

But enough of that big stuff ...



**Lets get *personal***

**Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church**

In the Presbyterian Church (USA) ...

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

The **PRESBYTERY** is the center of governance in the PC (USA)

Let's get personal!

Jesus Christ is the Head of our church – and I hope that you have a direct and personal relationship with Him.

The church does not stand between you and Jesus.

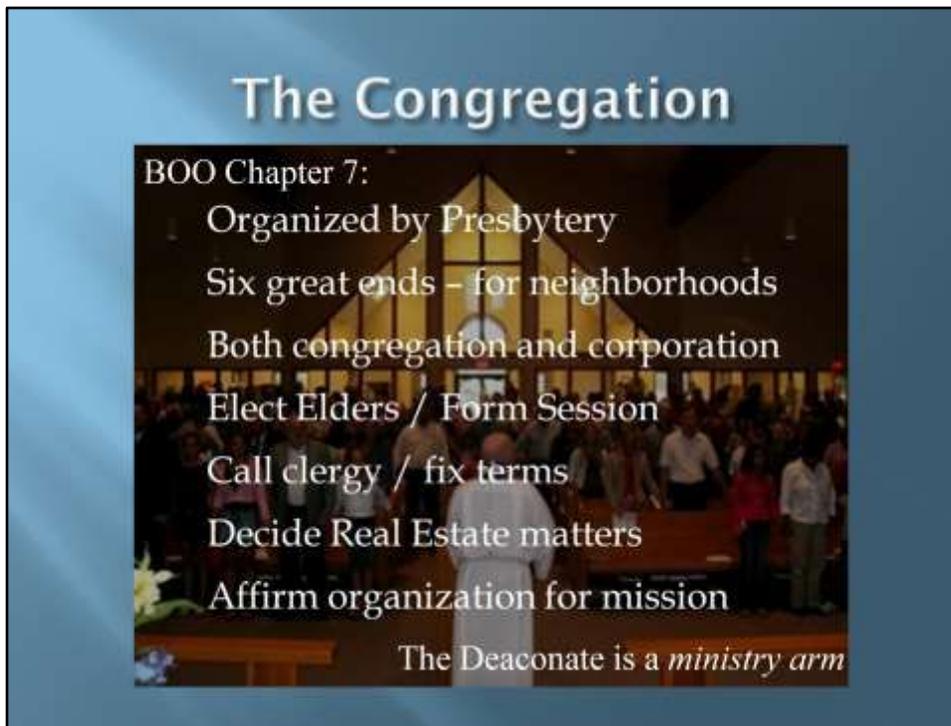
It helps you build your relationship with Him – and organize your accomplishment of His work for you - with others.

(Read the slide)

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

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

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



(Absorb the slide)

**G-7.0101 Organized by Presbytery as Part of the Whole** The church is both catholic (that is, “universal”) and particular. Both characteristics are to be found in a particular church. A particular church in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be organized only by the authority of a presbytery and shall function under the provisions of this Constitution.

**G-5.0100** The incarnation of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives to the church not only its mission\* but also its understanding of membership. One becomes an active member of the church through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life. Baptism and a public profession of faith in Jesus as Lord are the visible signs of entrance into the active membership of the church.

**\* Mission: Book of Order - G-1.0200 2. The Great Ends of the Church:**

The great ends of the church are the *proclamation of the gospel* for the salvation of humankind; the *shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship* of the children of God; the *maintenance of divine worship*; the *preservation of the truth*; the *promotion of social righteousness*; and the *exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven* to the world.

# The Session

BOO Chapter 9:

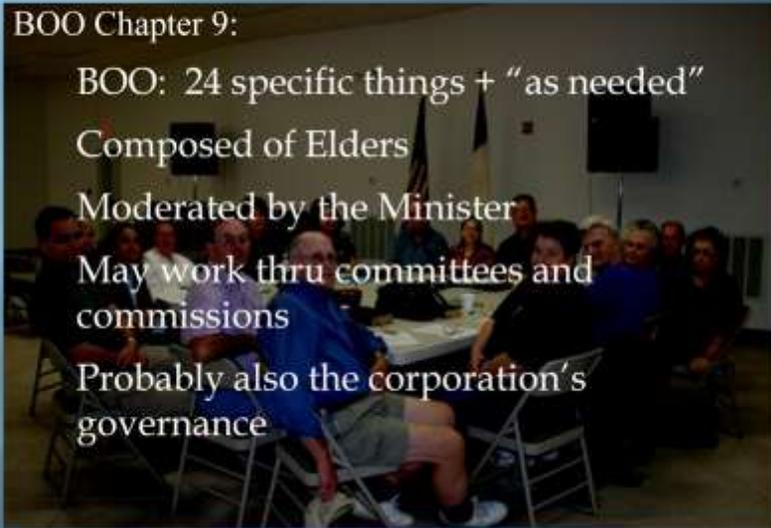
BOO: 24 specific things + “as needed”

Composed of Elders

Moderated by the Minister

May work thru committees and commissions

Probably also the corporation's governance



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

**G-10.0100** The session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders in active service. All members of the session, including the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors, are entitled to vote.

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.

Must meet at least quarterly, can meet more often – and can meet when specially called.

I won't try to describe how your particular church or how its session does and governs its activities toward the six great ends of the church in your neighborhood – that is for you to localize.

## The PC (USA) Presbytery

- 173 Presbyteries composed of over 11,000 congregations
- BOO Chapter 11:
  - 27 enumerated powers + *all* not enumerated elsewhere.
  - Composed of Minister-members and its Churches (represented by session-elected, Elder-Commissioners)
  - Moderator is an elected member (minister or elder)
  - Stated Clerk is an elected member (minister or elder)
  - Work “as the whole,” thru committees, commissions, etc.
  - Officers: Moderator and Clerk (plus others)
  - May call / hire staff

So, lets turn to the next “higher court” – the body whose existence makes our church “Presbyterian.”

**G-11.0100** Presbytery is a corporate expression of the church consisting of all the churches and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within a certain district. When a presbytery meets, each church shall be represented by an elder commissioned by the session...

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

# The Nevada Presbytery



30 Congregations and specialized ministries

1 new church development - Mesquite NV

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

1 NV church in Boise ID Presbytery

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

## Here is the Nevada Presbytery:

30 Congregations and specialized worshipping ministries

1 new church development - Mesquite NV

5 Eastern California congregations - 2 in Bishop, 1 in Lee Vining, 1 in Truckee, and 1 in South Lake Tahoe.

Note: there is 1 NV church in Boise (ID) Presbytery: Owyhee Presbyterian Church, Owyhee, NV.

## Who does what?

- Moderator – moderates Presbytery
- Stated Clerk – maintains the records of Presbytery

Council - Trustees

Committee on Representation

Nominating Committee / Personnel Committee

**Committee on Ministry**

**Committee on Mission Outreach**

**Committee on Equipping Ministries**

**Committee on Preparation for Ministry**

Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission

These are the officers and committees of the Nevada Presbytery

The Council and its financial sub-committee, the Trustees, integrate the business aspects of Presbytery.

The Committee on Representation ensures even and ratioed representation in the Presbytery's governance structure (a role specified in the PCUSA Constitution).

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

The mission work of Presbytery is done in the "large-type" committees.

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

## ... what is to come?

- Dec 31, 2010 – SMP dissolves – shared services divide
  - Stockton, Sacramento, and Nevada Presbyteries to assume their own full services for budget, operation, and manning
  - Shared Resources Center remains (three partners)
- Jan 1, 2011 - Nevada Presbytery – new *(same)* organization
  - Moderator and Stated Clerk remain *(constitutional)*
  - Permanent Committees and Judicial Commission *(same)* remain; but, with more work
  - *Staff added:* Bookkeeper, Presbytery Pastor

For the last (nearly) 40 years, staffing services have been shared among four, then three, relatively adjacent presbyteries in the Synod of the Pacific. This grouping, known as the Sierra Mission Partnership provided many necessary services to them – while the small and dispersed Presbyterian witness grew in their bounds. Now that these presbyteries are stronger, they have decided to dissolve their staffing partnership and absorb the functions within their own structures. This is the last of four such mission units to dissolve in the Synod – as the individual presbyteries' internal capacities have grown to the point of self-sufficiency.

You see the plan on the slide...

## The PC (USA) Synod

- 16 Synods composed of 173 Presbyteries
- BOO Chapter 12:
  - 19 enumerated powers + as granted by their presbyteries
  - Composed of Presbytery Commissioners and staff
  - Moderated by an elected member (minister or elder)
  - Stated Clerk is called (minister or elder)
  - Work “as the whole,” thru committees, commissions, etc.
  - Officers: Moderator and Stated Clerk (plus others)
  - May call / hire staff

Lets go up another step, to another “middle governing body” – the synod.

**G-12.0100** Synod is the unit of the church’s life and mission which consists of not fewer than three presbyteries within a specific geographic region. ... Synod is the intermediate governmental unit responsible for the mission of the church throughout its region.

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

## The Synod



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

(3 presbyteries in Sierra Mission Partnership)

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

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

Our Synod governing body is composed of fifty two Commissioners elected by the eleven presbyteries within its boundaries.

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



## A “Mission Support” Synod

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

These slides are from the Synod Orientation briefing in its last meeting – done to the rhyme of “Green Eggs and Ham” because our Synod is described in its Synod Administrative Manual – you guessed it, the SAM!

These are the Reverend Wendy Warner’s (the Synod Stated Clerk’s) slides.

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

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



## 6 Committees and a Commission

- The Synod Body is divided into three permanent committees for the mission purposes of the Synod (each commissioner on one committee):  
(SAM 3.1)
  - Mission Finance Committee
  - Mission Partnership Committee
  - Mission Personnel Committee
- And three other committees (smaller)
  - Nominating Committee
  - Committee on Representation
  - Coordinating Council
- Synod Permanent Judicial Commission

The work of synod is guided by its committees – and all commissioners are a member of one of these three biggies. Here is their introduction to the incoming commissioners ...

Mission Finance:

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

Mission Partnership:

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

Mission Personnel:

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



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  - Coordinating Council
- Synod Permanent Judicial Commission

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

Nominating:

Too many women / Or too many men

Then we have to / Start over again!

Representation:

COR stands for Representation / The meet with Nominations

To make sure that representation / Is each groups configuration!

Coordinating Council:

Finally, we have a Council / To coordinate it all

Reps from Presbys and chair-folk / Step forward and answer the call.

They do the agendas / And plan the day

To keep us timely / 'fore we go away

And a few commissioners are on the Permanent Judicial Commission:

Their meetings are infrequent / But long and hard they slave

Three days for a hearing / And unanimity they crave.

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



**Synod Staff**

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Staff members shown in the directory include: Rob Brink, Wendy Warner, Ani Lele'a, Ann Butterfield, Kendra Fraser, Melinda Durham, Del Hawley, and Patrice Alshuth.

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

**Rob Brink – Synod Executive**

I serve our Synod lots of ways / In committees near and far away / I have vision for the work we do / Evolving, adapting and keeping us new!

**Wendy Warner – Stated Clerk (1/3 time)**

The Clerk’s job varied across a wide span / With judicial cases to manage and then / Our Synod Assemblies, no matter who’s here, I have the job of order to appear!

**Ann Butterfield – Business Services Director**

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

**Ani Lele’a - Treasurer**

When a church has money to invest / a good return is best! / I’m just the one you’ll want to call / For I’m your Treasurer, after all!



**Synod Staff**

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Staff members shown in photos:

- Rob Brink
- Wendy Warner
- Ani Lele'a
- Ann Butterfield
- Kendra Fraser
- Melinda Durham
- Del Howley
- Patrice Alshuth

Kendra Frazer -

Loans and our website are an important part / Of our Synod operation  
 So I am just the one to call / If your church needs help with renovation!

Patrice Alshuth -

Your mission check to Synod / Will put your mind at ease  
 And if you have some questions / You should call me please!

Melinda Durham -

I'm new around here, but I still see / About the health of each employee.  
 You should not hesitate to call / I'd like to answer questions all!

Dell Howley –

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

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

## The PC (USA) General Assembly

- Composed of 173 Presbyteries (in 16 Synods)
- BOO Chapter 13:
  - 24 enumerated powers + as granted by the presbyteries.
  - Composed of an equal number of Minister and Elder Commissioners from the Presbyteries
  - Moderated by an elected member (minister or elder)
  - Stated Clerk is elected (minister or elder)
  - Work "as the whole," thru committees, commissions, etc. – and the GA Council, Office of the GA, four \$\$ corporations
  - Officers: Moderator and Stated Clerk (can have others)
  - May hire staff – and lots of it!

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

**G-13.0100** The General Assembly is the highest governing body of this church and is representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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



**Here is our denomination in whole:**

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

2+ million members in 10,751 congregations.

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



These next few slides are what the Reverend Sharon Stanley shared with us at Fall Presbytery about the 210<sup>th</sup> GA 2010 in Minneapolis, MN – which she attended as a commissioner from San Joaquin Presbytery.

Although Sharron was a commissioner to GA and is a regular attender of the Nevada Presbytery, you may know her as the founder and Executive director of the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Mission (FIRM).

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

Here is what Sharron saw happening at GA this summer in Minneapolis...

# Middle East Peacemaking

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



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

GA took this action on Middle East Peacemaking ...

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

# Caterpillar

## Approved Mission Responsibility Through Investment Report that:

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



GA took this action on another hot-button issue – corporate investment responsibility.

## Civil Union and Marriage

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



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

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

# Middle Governing Body Commission

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

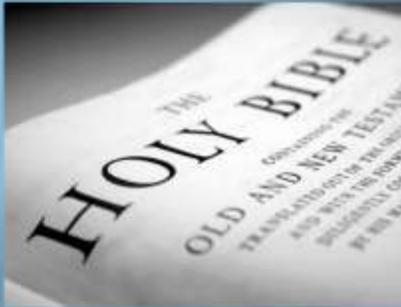


The Commission has the power "to organize new synods and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing" (G-13.0103m) and "to approve the organization, division, uniting or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods" (G-13.0103n) by majority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

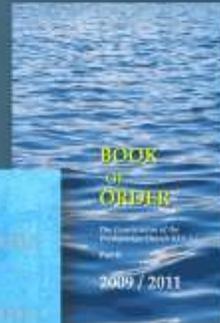
GA created this commission

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

## Where is this all written down?



- + BOO requires Manuals for Operation in each governing body (above Session)



Absorb screen...

## Presbyterian practice...

“... refer it to a committee...”

“... study it until it is no longer an issue ...”

“... enact something that woulda been radical then  
-- but is ho-hum, now ...”

Maybe you have observed or heard this ... about our ***polity.***



## Presbyterian motto...

“... decently – and in order ...”

We do adhere to our motto...



## Presbyterian motto...

“... decently – and in order ...”

“... reformed – and always reforming ...”

... and this ...



## Presbyterian motto...

“... decently – and in order ...”

“... reformed – and always reforming ...”

(... but, you ain't seen nutten yet!)

Lets see what is up for our church!

## OK, how does this affect me?

Recall:

“The Presbytery is the center of governance in the PC (USA)”

GA 2010 referred three items to the Presbyteries for their vote:

- Part 1 The “New FOG” – to realign / rearrange the Book of Order
- Part 2 The Belhar Confession – addition to the Book of Confessions
- Part 3 15 Amendments to the content of the Book of Order

These could/would change our **polity**:

- How we generally *express and standardize* how we Govern,
- What we Confess to be our faith, and
- Our **standards of Leadership** and 14 other things.

The 291 GA voted to refer these items to the Presbyteries for vote.

(pause to absorb slide)

... lets look at these proposed changes to our polity – and how we should prepare to vote on them as a presbytery.

## New Form of Government “N-FoG”



**Nothing changes until Presbyteries vote before July 10, 2011. If supported, new Book of Order begins next day.**

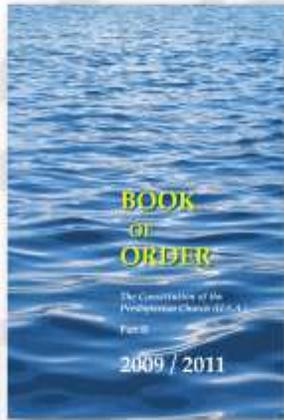
- Approved by 70% to 30% vote**
- Retains historic principles of PCUSA Church Government, and keeps most of 1<sup>st</sup> 4 chapters.**
- Proposes 6 chapters to respond to God's call to life in mission.**
- Proposes “Advisory Handbook for Councils for the Development of Policies and Procedures Required” be developed to aid councils.**

Here is what Sharron observed happening at GA ...

(that is JoAnn Poncho, commissioner to GA from Valley PC in our presbytery – east California)

# The PC(USA) Constitution

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Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

Just as a reminder ...

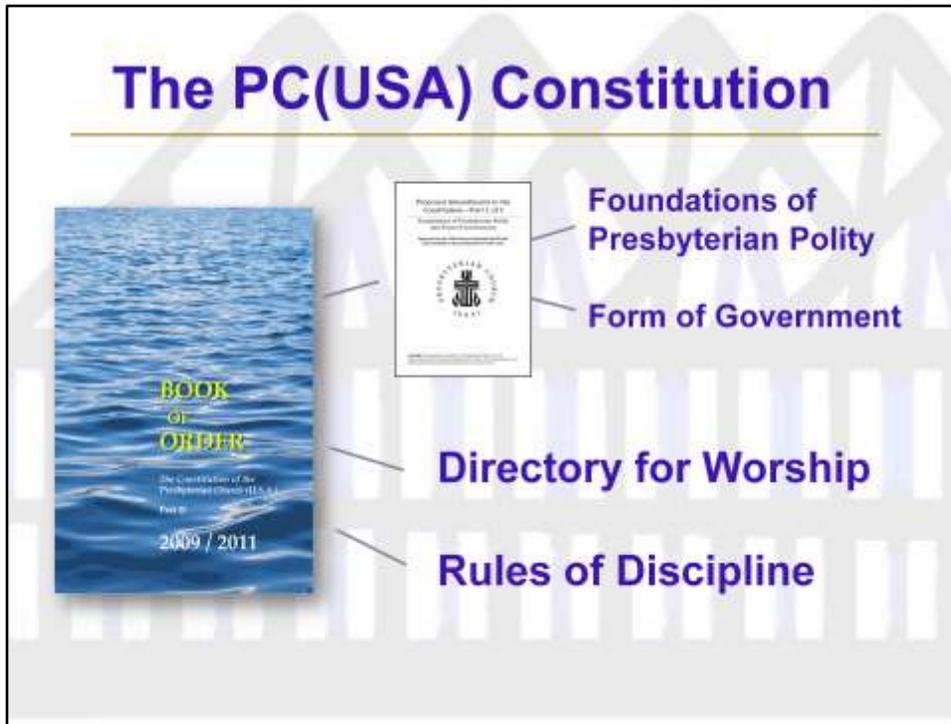
Our Book of Order currently has three parts:

The Form of Government, which describes our church's system of governance: functions, standards, and interrelationships,

The Directory for Worship, which provides required and suggested aspects of our worship life,

And the Rules of Discipline, which outlines the process for resolving judicial disputes that arise within the church.

# The PC(USA) Constitution



The proposal sent to the presbyteries by the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will revise the **Form of Government** section of the **Book of Order**.

This proposal envisions no changes to either the **Directory for Worship** or the **Rules of Discipline**.

The revision proposes that the church replace the current Form of Government with two documents:

“The **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity**,” containing most of the content from chapters 1-4 of the current Form of Government,

And a new “**Form of Government**” containing some of the material from chapters 5-18 of the current Form of Government. The rest of the content goes to Advisory Handbooks – which the middle governing bodies may localize to their specific situations and contexts.

## Part 1 of 3

# Studying The New FOG Report

**The Proposal to be voted by the Presbyteries before July 2011:**

The 219th General Assembly (2010) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

**Shall the *Book of Order* be amended** by striking out the text of Chapters I–XVIII of the current Form of Government (G-1.0000–G-18.0401) and inserting two documents,

**Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** and a new **Form of Government**,  
**to read as follows:** [Their text is in the study materials.]

**(All or nothing, yes or no, no amending)**

This is what comes to presbytery for vote.

## A Little Background

- Nearly 40 years of changes since restructure (in ~ 1983)
- 300 amendments since reunion – several moving in this direction
- Charge to the Task Force:
  - ✓ Preserve our foundational polity
  - ✓ Congregations seen as missional communities
  - ✓ Presbytery as central governmental unit
  - ✓ Flexibility at all levels in developing structures for mission
  - ✓ Guided by principles of mutual accountability and discernment in the Peace Unity and Purity Report:  
<http://oga.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity/resources/fullfinalreport.pdf>

(Review slide)

The PUP report to GA 217 is 56 pages ... not quoted here – look it up.

## What if it passes?

**Tasks:** (Revise Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Manuals, Policies)

- Sessions, Presbytery, and Synod review and update
- Handbooks to cover (and “localize”) removed material

**Process:**

- Review the body’s governance documents and handbooks (one time task)
- Assist sessions in their own review process
- Presbyteries and Synods can develop model policies in their area - for themselves and as guidelines for sessions

The Constitution of the PCUSA is quoted in most if not all of the civil governance documents of our congregations, presbyteries, synods, and the denomination (GA), itself.

Drastic change may require re-filing of all of these documents – better review them!

## Some resources...

Go to: <http://oga.pcusa.org/constitution.htm>, to  
<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/>, and to ...

- the Advisory Handbook in the amendment
- The current Form of Government (BOO 2009-2011)
- GA Advisory Handbooks for COM and CPM
- MGB Connect
- COM Matters
- Current manuals of operations
- People in your presbytery who love this kind of stuff...

Here are a few resources to help you understand the gravity of this change ...

I suggest that you download these in electronic form for your use!

## Some more resources...

On the Web site [www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment](http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment) find:

Proposed Amendments to the Constitution Part 1 of 3 (including Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Form of Government, and Advisory Handbook for Councils for the Development of Policies and Procedures)

Korean and Spanish translations of the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government.

Insert (including Letter from the Stated Clerk, Recommendations, General Information, and a Study Guide)

If you don't have a hard copy – download these too!

## And even more resources...

On the Web site [www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment](http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment) ...

### **Frequently asked questions**

**What Is Missional Ecclesiology?** by Paul Hooker, a minister member of the task force.

**A letter to PC(USA) elders** from Carol Hunley, a task force member who is a ruling elder.

**A brief reflection on the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** by noted author William Chapman.

Again – download!

The new term is “Missional” – and Paul Hooker’s articles is a very good explanation of it. This actually is a rather well developed concept – but a new emphasis in understanding the very familiar scriptures related to the church as the body of Christ.

## And still more resources...

On the Web site [www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment](http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment) ...

### **Comparison Chart:**

Proposed Foundations and Form of Government >> Current Form of Government

### **Comparison Chart:**

Current Form of Government >> Proposed Foundations and Form of Government

### **Form of Government PowerPoint Presentation**

Presented by The Form of Government Task Force to the Assembly Committee on the Form of Government Revision at the 219th General Assembly (2010).

The most helpful may be the current FOG – to – Proposed FOG map.

Pay particular attention to the stuff that seems to have no place to go!

I took the best of the PowerPoint and incorporated it in this presentation.

... and some they don't list!

**Guidelines for Communal Discernment**

*By the Reverend Victoria G. Curtiss*

[http://www.hudrivpres.org/upload/docs/curtiss\\_discernment.pdf](http://www.hudrivpres.org/upload/docs/curtiss_discernment.pdf)

**Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement**

<http://www.redstone.org/GUIDELINES%20FOR%20PRESBYTERIANS%20DURING%20TIMES%20OF%20DISAGREEMENT.pdf>

Here are two documents that may be extremely helpful – not just for this next Presbytery meeting, but for whenever we meet as the church to deliberate -- at any level.

## Studying The New FOG proposal

As with studying the proposed BOC addition and the BOO Amendments, study the proposed BOO re-organization and swap-out with a broad perspective.

- **Participants:** Read the material before meeting to study
- **Sessions:**
  - Use/borrow **local experts** – past clerks, Worship committee members, any elders with church disciplinary commission or investigative committee experience
  - Allow significant discussion time in session to prepare your commissioners to “vote their conscience” at Presbytery on this amendment
- **Presbytery:** Allow **1 hour of docket time** for study, then vote

Here is how the materials themselves suggest that you study the New FOG (enhanced by my remarks) ...

## Studying The New FOG proposal

- Study Materials:  
**Foundations of Presbyterian Polity  
and  
Form of Government**
- **Insert** to the Proposed ...- Part 1 of 3

These are the basic study materials, of course...

## All Participants

### Studying The New FOG proposal

- **Participants:**

- 1. Read the rationale (see the **Insert**) for Recommendation One in the report to get an overview of the purpose of this revision and a summary of its contents.
- More rationale in the **New FOG Task Force Report:**  
<http://www.negapby.org/FOGTF2010.pdf>

All participants should ...

(absorb the slide)



**All Participants**  
Studying The New FOG proposal

2. Read the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** and consider:

- As you look at Chapter 1, particularly F-1.01 and F-1.02, how do you see the relationship between God's mission, Christ's Lordship, and the church's calling?
- Where in these sections do you find God's call to the church to share God's saving love with the world?

In the proposal itself ...

(absorb the slide)



**All Participants**  
Studying The New FOG proposal

2. Read the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** and consider :

- Of the several ways we have historically understood the call of the church that are in section F-1.03, which best describes your personal understanding of the church?
  
- Which challenges you most to a new or expanded understanding?
  
- F-1.04 reminds us that the power of the Spirit is at work in the church calling us to engage in God's work in the world. As you read this section, how do you see the work of the Spirit related to ecumenicity, diversity, and openness?

... (read slide) ...



## All Participants

### Studying The New FOG proposal

2. Read the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** and consider :

- What does F-2.0 say to you about how the Confessions function in the life of the church?
- How does F-3.0 help you understand what it means to be Presbyterian and how the way Presbyterians make decisions in the church is different from other denominations?
- How would you imagine using the Foundations? (e.g., in officer training, confirmation, new member orientation, commissioner orientation, etc.)

... (read slide) ...

## All Participants

### Studying The New FOG proposal

3. Read the **Form of Government** and consider:

#### *Chapter 1*

- Summarize in your own words what it means to be a congregation based on G-1.0.
- Summarize what it means to be a member of a congregation based on G-1.03.

#### *Chapter 2*

- Having read this chapter, what do you understand to be the purpose of Ordered Ministry in the life of the church?
- Summarize or describe the ministries of deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders. How is this the same or different from the understanding you had before you read this chapter?

... (read slide) ...

## Commissioners

### Studying The New FOG proposal

3. Read the **Form of Government** (Chapter 2) and consider :

For **Committees on Ministry and Presbyteries**, especially:

- How would your presbytery provide for the relationship between the presbytery and teaching elders as described in this chapter in sections G-2.05 and G-2.07–G-2.09?
- Will it be helpful in your presbytery to permit exceptions as described in G-2.0504c?

For **Committees on Preparation for Ministry and Presbyteries**, especially:

- Does the process you now have in your presbytery and committee for guiding inquirers and candidates through the preparation process work well in your context? Will you need to add policies or procedures to your manual to guide that work?
- Does G-2.1001 - G-2.1004 give you the flexibility you need as a presbytery to prepare and commission ruling elders for particular service in congregations?

Commissioners and the Presbytery as a whole must also consider ...

(absorb the slide)

## Session and Commissioners

### Studying The New FOG proposal

3. Read the **Form of Government** (Chapter 3) and consider :

G-3.01 as an overview of the work of councils in the church. Then, turn to the sections relevant to the **session (G-3.02)** and/or **presbytery (G-3.03)** where you serve.

- How does organizing the responsibility and power of each council by the Notes of the Reformed Church help you to understand the role each has in carrying out the mission of the church?
- How would the flexibility in strategy and process provided in the proposed Form of Government allow your congregation or fellowship to witness more effectively in your setting?

The whole session of your church needs to help its commissioners to presbytery ...

(absorb the slide)

## All Participants

### Studying The New FOG proposal

*Chapter 4* - How does Chapter 4 help you understand where the government of the church engages with civil government?

*Chapter 5* - What provisions from the current Form of Government would you want to preserve in your manuals to guide the organization of a union presbytery or union or federated congregations?

*Chapter 6* - Is it clear to you how changes to and interpretation of the Constitution (the *Book of Order* and *The Book of Confessions*) would be accomplished in the proposed Form of Government?

All involved in the study should ...

(absorb the slide)



**Presbytery**  
**Studying The New FOG proposal**

- I. Call for God's help and focus those gathered on the task at hand (10 minutes)
- II. Introduce the process that will be used to study and discuss the New FOG (5 min.)
- III. Engage the format and content of the New FOG (60 min.)
- IV. Shall we replace the current Book of Order with the New FOG? (30 minutes)
- V. Conclude with prayer

Presbyteries themselves are asked to use their docket time this way ...

(absorb the slide)

## Evaluating New FOG...

**If you walked into a “New FOG polity-blueprinted building”**



Hers are some considerations I think may help you evaluate the proposal ...

Recalling the New FOG Task Force’s analogy ...

**Evaluating New FOG...**

**If you walked into a “New FOG polity-blueprinted building”**

**– could you find the dining room and know where to sit down for dinner?**

(absorb the slide)

## Evaluating New FOG...

In your study, you might consider ... Does the New FOG:

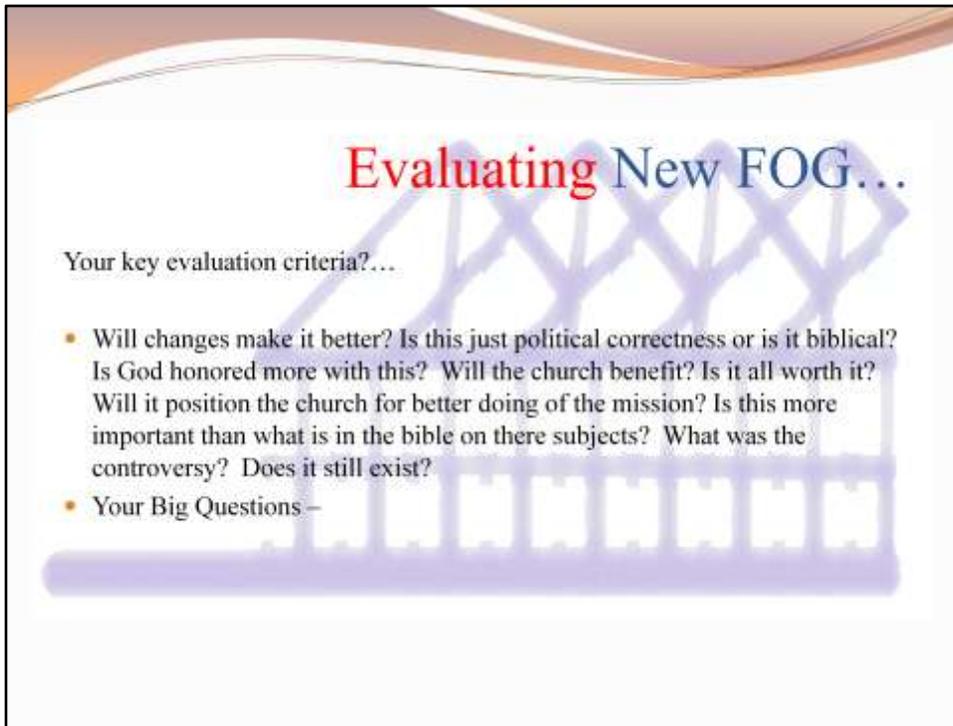
- Adequately describe the *interrelationships* between the parts of the church,
- Unambiguously set out the *standards* by which the church measures its ministry,
- Definitively outline the *functions* necessary to being the church.
  
- Can we get along without the deleted stuff?
  
- The Big Questions –

**Does the New FOG express the whole counsel of God in our practices?**

**Will we be clearly guided by its content?**

Recall what polity is ...

(absorb the slide)



These are the evaluation criteria suggested by the workshop participants at Equipping the Saints, November 6 ...

(absorb the slide)

Lets turn to the second proposal – adding the Belhar Confession to our Book of Confessions.

# Belhar Confession

**Approved 525-150-3 to send confession to Presbyteries for consideration for ratification by July 2011.**

**Approved form includes 2 amendments recommended by committee:**

- 1) Original scripture references to be added as footnotes*
- 2) Accompanying Letter to be included as background*

**Would be 1<sup>st</sup> confession approved in nearly 30 years.**



**80% of Christians live in global South. If approved, this would be our 1<sup>st</sup> confession from the region.**

Here is what Sharron saw happen at GA ...

(absorb the slide)

**Part 2 of 3**

## Studying The Belhar Confession

**The Proposal to be voted by the Presbyteries before July 2011:**

The 219th General Assembly (2010) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

**Shall *The Book of Confessions* be amended** by adding the **Confession of Belhar** following **A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** and its accompanying documents? The “Accompanying Letter” and scriptural references to the confession should be printed with it without confessional status if this proposal is adopted.

**(All or nothing, yes or no, no amending)**

This is how the question will come to the presbytery.

Note that three things are to be added to the BOC – the two explanatory and reference documents that accompany the confession describe the reasoning and add scriptural references to supplement the confession itself.

The material accompanying the Belhar Confession instructs:

Reformed confession of faith is not a casual undertaking. Churches typically make confession out of necessity, not simply because they think it would be a pleasant thing to do. Necessity comes in many forms, but most often churches are compelled to express their faith when they experience threats to the integrity of their witness coming from:

- **internal confusion** about core matters of faith,
- from ***the culture’s rival accounts of truth and morals***,
- or from ***threats to the church’s freedom***.

Reform of the church—in the sixteenth century and the twenty-first century—grows from response to the gracious action of God; the church is always *to be reformed* by God.

## Studying Belhar...

- Note: The Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) are also in the process of adding this confession.
- Study is best done in groups with diverse perspectives.
  - **Participants** - Read the material before meeting to study
  - **Sessions** – Allow significant discussion time in session – with your Worship Commission / Committee - to prepare your commissioners to “vote their conscience” at Presbytery
  - **Presbyteries** - Allow **two docket hours** for study, then vote

Often, multiple motivations are present in churches' declarations of faith, but confessions that endure are more than bland restatements of Christian verities. The church writes confessions of faith when it faces a situation of life or a situation of death so urgent that it cannot remain silent, but must speak .... Since urgent situations are seldom unique to a particular time and place, the church may need to hear the voices of the whole communion of saints from all times and places ... to protect the integrity of confession ... from the distortions of ecclesial nearsightedness.

The church is always to be reformed “according to the word of God,” that is, in accord with, consistent with, the clear witness of Scripture. The Reformed tradition has always understood itself to be “Scripture-shaped.”

Please understand that even though its treatment in this presentation is brief, it is an equally important issue – and must be seriously considered. I encourage all participants, sessions, and the presbytery itself to be a rigorous in their preparatory review of this confession as it is with the new FOG.

The assembly committee report related to Confession of Belhar, and more background information from various entities may now be accessed at <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3353&promoID=174.>)

## Studying Belhar...

- I. Call for God's help and focus those gathered on the task at hand (10 minutes)
- II. Introduce the process that will be used to study and discuss the Confession of Belhar (5 min.)
- III. Engage the text of the Confession of Belhar (60 min.)
- IV. Shall we incorporate the Confession of Belhar into our confession of the faith that constitutes us? (30 minutes)
- V. Conclude with prayer

Again, for the presbytery ...

(absorb the slide)

Note the similarity of these recommendations

## Evaluating Belhar...

In your study, you might consider ...

- Is there a controversy (*internal confusion, cultural challenge, threat to the church*) that is ripe for this confession at this time?
- Does this confession communicate what God says about the controversy – in clear, accurate, understandable, and unambiguous language?
- (Recall your ordination vow) Do you ... adopt ... the **confessions of our church** as authentic and reliable expositions of ...Scripture ...and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
- The Big Questions –

**Does this confession express our faith?**

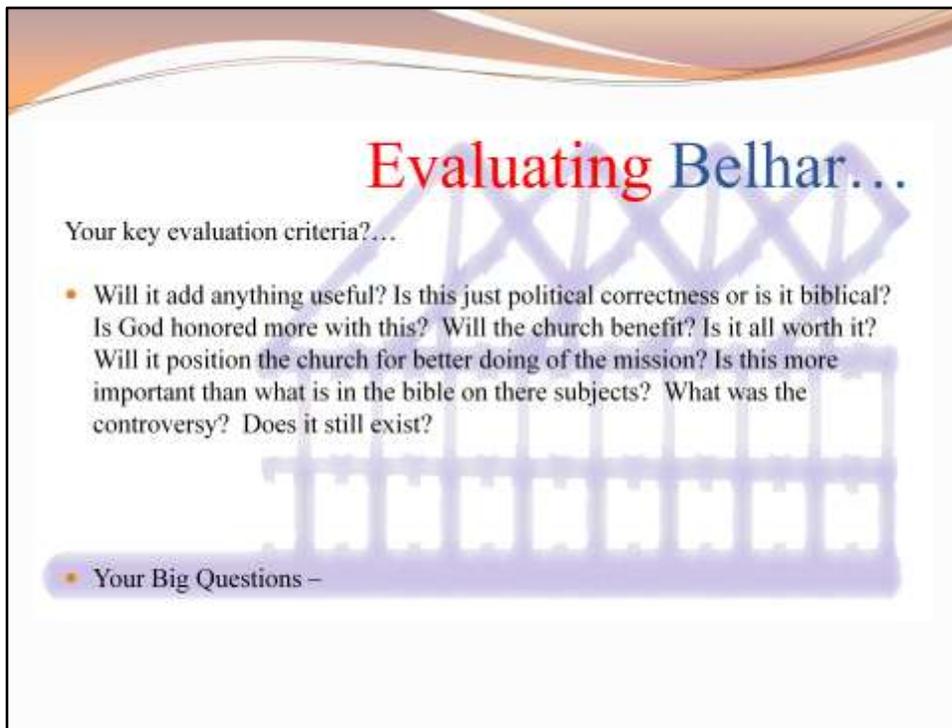
**Will we be clearly guided by its content?**

Here are my evaluation suggestions ... using the study material provided as a lens.

(absorb the slide)

Remember, you do vow:

(W-4.4003c.) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the **confessions of our church** as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God? **Do you?**



These are the evaluation criteria suggested by the workshop participants at Equipping the Saints, November 6 ...

(absorb the slide)

Interestingly, they were much the same as to the first proposal.

Lets turn to the third proposal – the 15 content amendments to our Book of Order.

## The BOO Content Amendments

- Fifteen amendments to Book of Order:
  - **Form of Government:** ten affected paragraphs
  - **Directory for Worship:** three affected paragraphs
  - **Rules of Discipline:** nine affected paragraphs

In these 15 amendments, 22 paragraphs of the current Book of Order are affected – in all three parts of the Book.

This is a very broad set of changes to the Constitution – far greater than any I have voted on (except for the wholesale movement of ordination service information moved from the G section to the W section - and the procedural information removed to Advisory Handbooks for CPM and COM - a few years ago).

# Ordination Standards

## Proposed Change to Ordination Standards

(One of 15 proposed BOO Amendments).

Majority of presbyteries must approve by July 2011 to replace current G-6.0106b with new language that begins:

"Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life." (G-1.0000)



One of these proposals is an historic hot-button issue and here was the vote at GA about referring it to the presbyteries for vote ...

For those who don't have G-6.0106b memorized, we will see it a bit later.

## Part 3 of 3

### Studying The BOO Content Amendments

- Remember: a separate vote is taken on each PROPOSED AMENDMENT – so study each one!
- Each amendment is presented in this form:
  - **“Shall [existing BOO paragraph] be amended by striking the current text and inserting new text in its place as follows: ...”** [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]
  - **Background and Rationale** is provided including overture history and sponsoring Presbytery (and others’ if extant) rationale
  - **Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution** as to their assessment of consistency with the rest of the BOO is provided as well as an Editor’s note on its location in the proposed New FOG.

... (read slide) ...

## Studying The BOO Content Amendments

### **The Proposal to be voted by the Presbyteries before July 2011:**

The 219th General Assembly (2010) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall *The Book of Order* be amended** by striking the current text and inserting new text in its place as follows:
  - **Form of Government:** G-6.0106b; G-9.0203b; G-9.0404; G-9.0801a; G-11.0407; G-12.0100; G-13.0108; G-13.0111a; G-13.0202b; G-14.0730,
  - **Directory for Worship:** W-4.4003h, W-4.4004a(2), W-4.4006b(2),
  - **Rules of Discipline:** D-6.0103; D-6.0306; D-8.0302; D-10.0202; D-10.0401; D-13.0102; D-13.0106; D-13.0302; D-13.0404.

**(Each proposed amendment is voted separately-  
no amending is allowed)**

These are the paragraphs affected by these proposed changes ...

## Studying The BOO Content Amendments

As with studying the proposed BOC addition, study the proposed BOO changes with a broad perspective.

- **Participants:** Read the material before meeting to study
- **Sessions:**
  - Use/borrow **local experts** – past clerks, Worship Committee members, retired pastors, any elders with church disciplinary commission or investigative committee experience
  - Allow significant discussion time in session to prepare your commissioners to “vote their conscience” at Presbytery on each amendment
- **Presbytery:** Allow an **hour and three quarters of docket time** for study, then vote

Similar recommendations are made in the material for you preparation ...

(absorb the slide)

The time estimate is mine.

## Studying BOO Amendments...

- I. Call for God's help and focus those gathered on the task at hand (10 minutes)
- II. Introduce the process that will be used to study and discuss the 15 Book of Order amendments (5 min.)
- III. Engage the text of each Amendment and vote (~5 min. each = an hour and a half - max) many will go fast.
- IV. Conclude with prayer

I have added this formula recommendation (paralleling the other recommended litanies) for consideration of these amendments at Presbytery.

(absorb the slide)

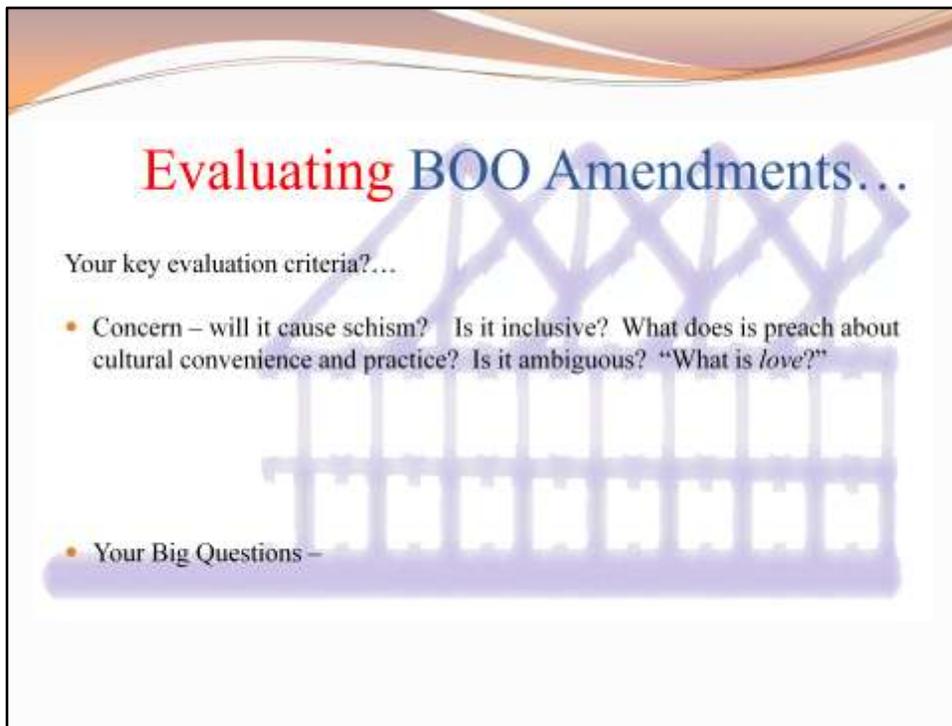
## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

In your study, you might consider ...

- Will this amendment make it easier to do the work of the church?
- Will this amendment sufficiently standardize our practices?
- Does this amendment further the Purity, Unity, and Peace of the PC (USA)?
- The Big Questions –  
**Does this amendment express the whole counsel of God in our practices?**  
**Will we be clearly guided by its content?**

These questions may help you evaluate the proposals as you study them.

(absorb the slide)



These are the evaluation criteria suggested by the workshop participants at Equipping the Saints, November 6 ...

(absorb the slide)

Now lets turn to the individual proposals ...

## 10-A. Ordination standards – Studying **G-6.0106b** change...

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

- Church Order and Ministry Committee vote 36/16/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010), vote 373/323/4.

W-4.4003 – Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons.

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*Sample study questions* - Do the ordination questions contain the emphases deleted from this paragraph? Or are these emphases lost? Does it matter to our faith and practice?

Note the vote in committee and by GA ... it will give you a hint as to the controversy attached to a given proposal.

## 10-B. Removing Stated Clerk (process) - Studying **G-9.0203b** addition...

“b. The clerk of the session shall be an elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine. The clerk of a presbytery, a synod, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, shall be elected by the governing body for a definite term as it may determine, and must be eligible for membership in the governing body. *A stated clerk may be removed from office prior to completion of his or her term of service through the use of the process outlined in G-9.0705.*”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 42/0/1.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

This is a clean-up item bringing the removal process for the stated clerk to an appropriate place in the development of the description.

(absorb the slide)

Less controversial – note the votes in committee and GA.

## 10-c. Sexual misconduct policy – Studying **G-9.0404e** addition...

“G-9.0404 In order to give meaning to the interdependent nature of Presbyterian polity:...

*“e. All governing bodies shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy.”*

Additionally, the General Assembly “strongly recommends that prior to vote on this amendment, presbyteries take time to educate the presbytery on the reasons for and value of a sexual misconduct policy. Resources are available on the PC(USA)Web site” (*Minutes*, 2010, Part I, p. 227).

- General Assembly Procedures Committee (03) vote 52/1/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

**Nevada Presbytery has adopted such a policy – your session should too.**

(absorb the slide)

Email me ([Art@AGRitter.com](mailto:Art@AGRitter.com)) and I will send the Presbytery Policy to you.

## 10-D. Representation cleanup – Studying G-9.0801a change...

- “a. Each presbytery and synod shall elect a **nominating committee** broadly representative of the member churches of the presbytery or presbyteries, with a membership of **one-third ministers** of the Word and Sacrament, **one-third laywomen**, and **one-third laymen** and elders, women and men, in numbers as nearly equal as possible. The nominating committee shall consist of three classes, each serving for a three-year term except where initial classes of one- and two-year terms are necessary to establish regular rotation.”
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 41/1/1.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

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We will see this ratio description in other proposals. When you deal with small numbers, you cannot achieve precise ratios.

## 10-E. Roll and register – Studying G-11.0407 change...

- “The stated clerk shall maintain four rolls, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are active members, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are members-at-large, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are inactive members, and one listing all ~~Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators~~ within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, and a fifth roll listing those who have been deleted from the other rolls. On or before December 31 of each year, the presbytery shall determine the category of membership of each continuing member in accordance with the relevant sections of this chapter and cause appropriate record of such determination to be made. *The stated clerk shall also maintain two registers, one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, and one listing all Commissioned Lay Pastors within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice and vote at all presbytery meetings during the term of service in a church or other validated ministry.*”
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 35/3/2.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

(absorb the slide)

This accounts for Christian Educators and CLPs – recognizing that those CE's who are also ordained as Elders may vote. We will see this “fix” again, too.

## 10-F. Elder-CCE voice *and* vote— Studying G-11.0407 and G-14.0730b change...

- ... one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice *only*, and, in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are *ordained elders*, voice and vote, at all presbytery meetings, ...
- “b. provide the following support to the eCertified Christian eEducators: service of recognition that shall include the constitutional questions at W-4.4003 (G-11.0103n); establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits (G-11.0103n); and access to the committee on ministry (G-11.0503). ~~The presbytery may grant the privilege of the floor to the Certified Christian Educator at all its meetings with voice only, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b, during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery. (G-11.0407) In accordance with G-11.0407, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery.~~
- Church Orders and Ministry Committee (06) vote 53/0/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) vote 570/67/10.

See?

(absorb the slide)

## 10-G. Reduced synod function & shared admin— Studying G-12.0100 change...

- Add a new G-12.0103 - *“A synod may decide, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of its presbyteries, to reduce its function. In no case shall synod function be less than the provision of judicial process and administrative review of the work of the presbyteries. Such a synod shall meet at least every two years for the purposes of setting budget, electing members to its permanent judicial commission, and admitting to record the actions of its permanent judicial commission and administrative commissions. Presbyteries of such a synod shall assume for themselves, by mutual agreement, such other synod functions as may be deemed necessary by the presbyteries for the fulfillment of their missions.”*
- Add a new G-12.0104 - *“Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods, may share administrative services.”*
- Committee on Middle Governing Body Issues (04) vote 36/0/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by a voice vote.

Recall and relate this proposal to the newly approved, GA Commission on Middle Governing Bodies – and what they are charged to do ...

(absorb the slide)

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

Reported at Synod – this commission sees itself with a far more sweepingly activist mandate. Apparently, some synods aren’t getting the job done!

10-H. "...nearly equal as possible..."  
Studying G-13.0108, G-13.0111a, and G-13.0202b change...

- (G-13.0108) "The General Assembly shall establish a permanent Committee on Representation ... of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are ~~one-third ministers (both women and men), one-third laymen, and one-third laywomen~~ *ministers and elders (both women and men) in numbers nearly as equal as possible.*"
- (G-13.0111a) "a. The ... General Assembly Nominating Committee ... shall consist of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are ~~one-third ministers (both women and men), one-third laymen, and one-third laywomen~~ *ministers and elders (both women and men) in numbers nearly as equal as possible.* (G-9.0801, G-11.0501, G-12.0102d, G-13.0202) [The rest of the paragraph remains unchanged.]"
- (G-13.0202b) "b. In the nominating process, the General Assembly Nominating Committee shall ... shall ensure that, exclusive of the Moderator and predecessor Moderators, ~~one-third of the members are ministers of the Word and Sacrament (both women and men), one-third laymen, and one-third laywomen~~ *ministers and elders (both women and men) are in numbers nearly as equal as possible. ....*"
- Committee on Church Polity (05) vote 42/1/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

The "one-third" versus "nearly equal" issue again.

(absorb the slide)

10-I. Vows to pray for those in their charge—  
Studying W-4.4003h, W-4.4004a(2) and W-4.4006(b)2 addition...

- (W-4.4003) – add: “h. Will you *pray for and* seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?”
- (W-4.4004a) – add:“(2) Do we agree *to pray for them*, to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?”
- (W-4.4006(b)) – add:“(2) Do we agree *to pray for him (her)*, to encourage him (her), to respect his (her) decisions, and to follow as he (she) guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?”
- Theological Issues and Institutions Committee (16) vote 54/0/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

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The members and officers of the Church of Jesus Christ are repeatedly urged by the Holy Spirit in Scripture to pray for one another (Ex. 8:9; 1 Sam. 12:23; 2 Kings 19:4; Ezra 6:9f; Ps. 72; Mt. 5:44; Jn. 17; Acts 4:23–31; Rom. 15:31f; Eph. 1:15–21, 3:14–19, 6:18–20; Col. 1:3, 4:3; 1Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18; Jas. 5:16).

Yet nowhere in our services of ordination and/or installation do either members or officers commit to do so!

## 10-J. Stay of enforcement – Studying **D-6.0103** change...

- (Very long text) Defines and replaces procedures for **stay of enforcement** (i.e., the suspension of a decision or an action until a complaint or appeal is finally determined).
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 41/0/2.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

Really wonk stuff – better get a local expert on this one!

10-K.(Limited) finding without challenge –  
Studying **D-6.0306, D-8.0302, and D-13.0302** addition...

- *“d. If no challenge is made to a finding of the moderator and clerk that one or more points listed in D-6.0305 (or D-8.0301, or D-13.0106, as applicable) has been answered in the negative, the case shall be dismissed without further action or order of the permanent judicial commission.”*
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 41/2/0.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

(absorb the slide)

This is the rule of “silence is assent” found in Roberts Rules of Order – and now made explicit here.

## 10-L. Limit repetition of charges – Studying D-10.0202 addition ...

- (insert and re-number list) *“c. determine whether the accusation repeats allegations previously made against the accused, and if so, report to the governing body having jurisdiction over the accused that it will not file charges (D-10.0202j) unless the accusation contains new information warranting investigation or is the subject of an investigation that has not been concluded.”*
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 42/0/1.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

(absorb the slide)

This is the rule of “dilatatory repetition” also found in Robert’s – again made explicit here.

## 10-M. Increase time for filing charges – Studying D-10.0401 change...

“No charges shall be filed later than ~~three~~ *five* years from the time of the commission of the alleged offense, nor later than one year from the date the investigating committee was formed, whichever occurs first, except as noted below.”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 38/5/1.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus

A slight increase in time to report.

(absorb the slide)

10-N. Appeal of “Not Guilty” Verdict–  
Studying D-13.0102 and D-13.0106 change...

(D-13.0102) ~~“Either party may initiate the first level of appeal by the filing of a written notice of appeal~~

*Only the person found guilty may initiate the first level of appeal by the filing of a written notice of appeal.”*

(D-13.0106) ~~“a-~~The grounds for appeal by the person found guilty are [list of 8 items is retained and renumbered]

~~“b. The grounds for appeal by the prosecuting committee are [and its list of 6 items is also deleted]~~

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 40/1/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

Restricts the right of appeal to only the person found guilty – and removing it from the prosecutor.

(absorb the slide)

We will see this issue again ...

10-O. Remand if case is an appeal of “not guilty” by prosecutor—  
Studying D-13.0404 addition ...

Note logical linkage to previous item, 10-N.

“After the hearing and after deliberation, the permanent judicial commission shall vote separately on each specification of error alleged. The vote shall be on the question, ‘Shall the specification of error be sustained?’ The minutes shall record the numerical vote on each specification of error. *If the appeal was initiated by a prosecuting committee appealing a verdict of not guilty and the permanent judicial commission sustains that portion of the appeal, the permanent judicial commission shall remand the case for a new trial.*”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 39/1/4.
- The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.

Last BOO content amendment item!

And the last of these fifteen proposed changes ...

(absorb the slide)

[The accompanying Editor’s Note: If proposed amendment 10-N is approved by a majority of the presbyteries, it will delete the power of a prosecuting committee to appeal a verdict of not guilty in a disciplinary case. Proposed amendment 10-O will then be moot (*sooner or later*) since it limits the Permanent Judicial Commission response to an action that will no longer be allowed under the Rules of Discipline. However, if item 10-N is not approved by a majority of the presbyteries, then item 10-O, if approved by a majority of the presbyteries, will limit the response that a Permanent Judicial Commission may make in a judicial disciplinary case where the prosecuting committee has appealed a verdict of not guilty.]

## Next Steps for Sessions and NV Presbytery:

- **Today! Saturday, November 6, 2010 – Equipping the Saints** – review our polity and prepare to study its proposed changes
  - **November - December, 2010** – Sessions, Commissioners, and Ministers introduced to the GA-referred proposals for study – study commences
- **March 15-16, 2011 – Spring Presbytery @ Green Valley PC** – vote on the proposals

Here is the preparation roadmap. Council asked Equipping to prepare each of the sessions – and since my polity presentation / workshop was to focus on it ... here I am – and here I will be until we are prepared!

My plan is to update this presentation each time I give it – to incorporate the input of each audience. I will post each version on my website: [www.AGRitter.com](http://www.AGRitter.com).

Thanks you - and God bless our effort to conform everything we do to glorify Him.