

# Equipping the Presbyters: Godly Decision-making Three Parts for Vote

Facilitated by Elder Art Ritter,  
Vice Moderator, Nevada Presbytery

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 our responsibilities as presbyters for Godly Decision-making – especially as it relates to the “Parts 1 through 3” of the Amendments to the Constitution that the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of our Denomination this last summer referred to the Presbyteries for affirmation – or rejection. (There are actually 17 amendments in these three parts!)

This workshop is produced for the purposes of:

- *teaching* you about our polity and how we change its formal structure,
- *informing* you about these three major Amendments to our Constitution,
- and for *preparing and encouraging* your personal and our corporate study, -- **so that** we can vote God’s will on these proposed amendments in our Spring Presbytery meeting, decently and in order.

## 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
    - Member, Equipping Ministries
    - Vice Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada,
  - NV Presbytery Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific.
    - Member, Synod's Mission Personnel Committee.
  - NV Presbytery delegate to and Board Member of the Religious Alliance In Nevada – a consortium of five mainline denominations advocating God's will to the state government for social justice in Nevada.
  - Polity (business model) wonk – in real life, too.

*And you? ...*

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

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

I have provided this workshop now to eight gatherings of Presbyters – first, in our Presbytery's "Equipping the Saints" event, as one of several workshops back on November 6<sup>th</sup> at Mountain view Presbyterian Church last year ... and in seven workshops "on the road" from January 10<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> for our Presbyters in churches as they conveniently cluster across the Nevada Presbytery.

As you will soon see, we have a great amount of mature and broad polity experience across our presbytery! I asked the workshop participants about their association with denominational polity. Here is what they shared (as best as I remember) about the experience they have had - and then, generously shared in these workshops ...

## Equipping the Saints November 6,

**Invited:** Presbyters from the Nevada Presbytery

- All were elders (session experience)
- Some ministers (session and presbytery experience).
- Two had extensive presbytery / committee experience
- One had (synod) judicial commission experience.
- One had been to 9 General Assembly meetings.

In the **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS** workshop audience, November 6:

- All were elders (session experience) or ministers (session and presbytery experience) – no Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLPs).
- Two had extensive presbytery / committee experience.
- One had (synod) judicial commission experience.
- One had been to 9 General Assembly meetings, including 2010 – as an observer / allied ministry member.

## Equipping the Presbyters January 10

**Invited:** Presbyters from Hawthorne and Tonopah PCs

- All elders (session experience)
  - (plus a couple of spouse-drivers observers)
  - Two to GA (one in 1983!)
  - One an altar-boy
- Most long-time Presbyterians (one baptized in 2000)
- Two Commissioned Lay Pastors (presbytery experience)
  - Vice Moderator / Moderator of Presbytery experience
  - Synod (finance committee) experience
  - One Synod Permanent Judicial Commission training (no experience)

In the **HAWTHORNE** workshop, January 10<sup>th</sup>, (to which the Presbyters from Hawthorne and Tonopah PCs were invited), this much polity experience was in the room ...

All were elders (with session experience, of course) or CLPs - plus a couple of spouse-drivers observers. Two of these had been to GA at least once (one in 1983! We ill see how auspicious that was in a bit.) One did 'fessed up that he had been an altar-boy.

Most were life-long of long-time Presbyterians (though one was baptized in 2000 and now serves as Session treasurer).

Between the two Commissioned Lay Pastors (Presbytery experience)... one had been Vice Moderator / Moderator of our Presbytery, and the other had been a commissioner to our Synod (serving on its finance committee) ... and had Synod Permanent Judicial Commission training, as well (but no *experience on that commission – yet!*).

## Equipping the Presbyters January 11

**Invited:** Presbyters from Bishop and Valley PCs, and Lee Vining

- Elder (session and presbytery experience)
- Minister (session and presbytery experience in 3 presbyteries)
- Presbytery committee experience

In the **BISHOP** workshop, January 11<sup>th</sup>, (to which the Presbyters from Lee Vining and Bishop's First and Valley Presbyterian Churches were invited), this much polity experience was in the room ...

One was a long-time Elder (with session and presbytery experience) and the other was a Minister (with session and presbytery experience - in 3 presbyteries).

## Equipping the Presbyters January 12

**Invited:** Presbyters from South Lake Tahoe, Incline, and Gardnerville PCs

- Elder (session and some with presbytery experience)
- Deacon (Deaconate experience)
- Observers
- Vice Moderator, Moderator, Council Chair and extensive committee experience

In the **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE** workshop, January 12<sup>th</sup> (to which the Presbyters from the South Lake Tahoe, Incline Village, and Gardnerville PCs had been invited), this much polity experience was in the room ...

Several were Elders (with session and some with presbytery experience), one was a Deacon (Deaconate experience), several were simply there as observers.

Among these there was extensive Vice Moderator, Moderator, Council Chair, and presbytery committee experience.

## Equipping the Presbyters January 13

**Invited:** Presbyters from Truckee, Reno, and Sparks PCs

- Elder (session and some with presbytery experience)
- Minister (session and presbytery experience)
- Observer (about 8 – he colored a lot)
- Vice Moderator, Moderator, Council Chair and extensive committee experience
- GA commissioner experience

In the **RENO** workshop, January 13<sup>th</sup> (to which the Presbyters from the Truckee, Reno, and Sparks PCs had been invited), we had this polity experience in the room ...

Again, most were Elders (session and some with presbytery experience); but, there were also two Ministers (session and presbytery experience) ... and one observer, who was about 8 and had come with his Dad. He colored a lot and asked few questions.

Among these, there was Vice Moderator, Moderator, Council Chair, and extensive presbytery committee experience, and there was GA commissioner experience, too (two cycles worth).

## Equipping the Presbyters January 14

**Invited:** Presbyters from Wells, Lamoille, and Elko PCs

- Ministers (session presbytery)
- Elder (session)
- Extensive presbytery committee experience (6 presbyteries)
- Recent COM, CPM experience (as an Inquirer, Candidate)
- Personal friends/co-worker with author of Item 10-A

In the **ELKO** workshop, January 14<sup>th</sup> (to which the Presbyters from the Wells, Lamoille, and Elko PCs had been invited), there was this polity experience in the room ...

Two churches were represented – both of their ministers (session and presbytery experience) and one Elder (session experience only).

Among the ministers, one had extensive presbytery committee experience (in 6 presbyteries!), one had recent COM, CPM experience (as an Inquirer, Candidate – this is her first pulpit, but her husband is a retired, career minister!), and one is the personal friend / co-worker with the author of Item 10-A. She shared the huge struggles of writing this item!

## Equipping the Presbyters January 15

**Invited:** Presbyters from Las Vegas PCs

- Minister (session and presbytery experience)
- Elders (session and some presbytery experience)
- Experience across several presbyteries
- Experience with presbytery committees

In the **LAS VEGAS** workshop, January 15<sup>th</sup> (to which the Presbyters from all of the Las Vegas PCs had been invited), there was this polity experience in the room ...

One was a Minister (session and presbytery experience across 4 presbyteries) and the rest were Elders (session and some presbytery experience).

## Equipping the Presbyters January 17

**Invited:** Presbyters from Henderson PCs

- Ministers (session and presbytery experience)
- Elders (session and some presbytery experience)
- Experience across 8 presbyteries
- Experience with many presbytery committees
- Vice Moderator, Moderator, Past Moderator – Extended!

And finally, in the **HENDERSON** workshop, January 17<sup>th</sup> (to which the Presbyters from all of the Henderson PCs had been invited), we had this polity experience in the room ...

Three were Ministers (extensive session and presbytery experience) - one had just been installed in one of our presbytery pulpits – his second time back to a call in this presbytery!

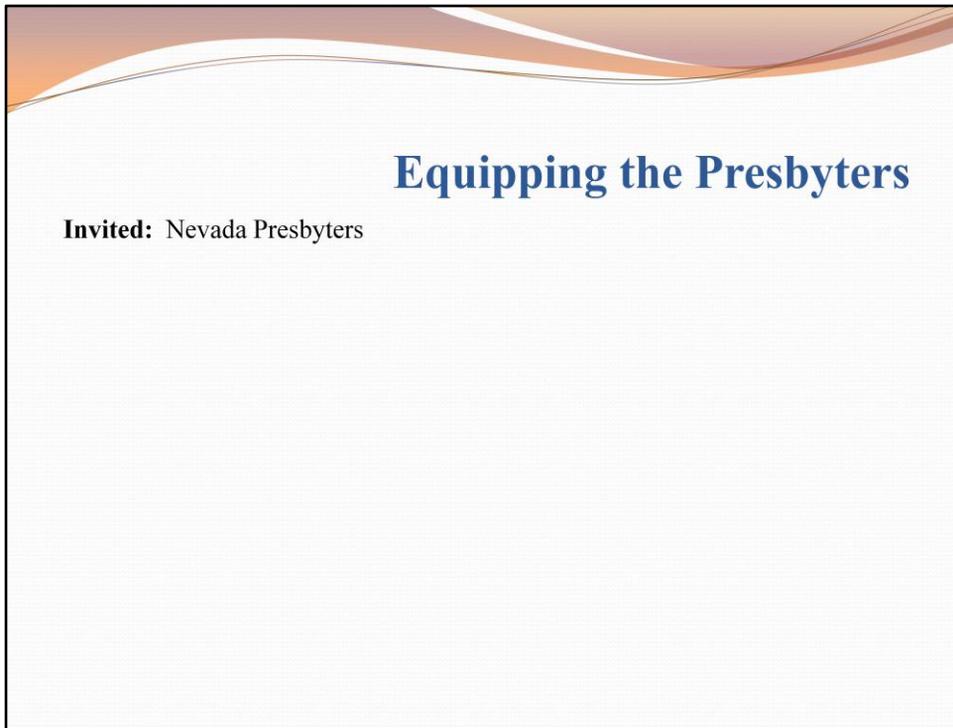
There was one CLP (extensive preparation experience with session, specialized ministries, and presbytery committees (as inquirer and candidate) and, again, most were Elders (session and some presbytery experience).

Among them they shared ministerial experience across 8 presbyteries in all

Many were experienced with several presbytery committees

One had been Vice Moderator, Moderator, Past Moderator – and *Extended Past Moderator!*

So you can see our presbytery is no stranger to our polity!



What about you?

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

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

Well, we see that there is a bit of attachment to polity in this room, too!

So, let's dive right in ...

## What did we get ourselves into here?

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

I suppose that even by now, some may be questioning their judgment about tuning in today ... Well, I hope it won't be that bad!

Today, we will find an overview of what polity is to start out with – and how it helps us to do what we do as a church.

Then we will address the subject of studying the three proposals for *change* in our polity.

Although we will not debate, discuss, or argue these proposals today (or even get into their content very much), we will spend our 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 as you have some part to play in the process.

Again -- my purpose today is to **persuade you** to study the amendment proposals -- on your own, within your Session, and with mature Christians whose opinions and experiences and expertise can be helpful -- so that our consideration of them together at Presbytery this Spring will bring us to God's will for our church in each vote.

## POLITY ...

... lends an *air of dignity* to what otherwise would be a *disorganized brawl*

... brings *order out of chaos*

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

First off, what is this **polity** thing we have been talking about? -- and -- What is the role of polity in the life of the Church?

Well, here are some working definitions of “polity” ...

Pause to read the slide

The first one is what the US Army thinks of its field artillery!

The next two are pretty good *conceptual* definitions ...

## POLITY ...

**“How God works through His people”**

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

- *accomplish the mission* **God gives His Church** and
- *achieve the vision* **God has for His Church.**

These may be more precise definitions of “polity” ...

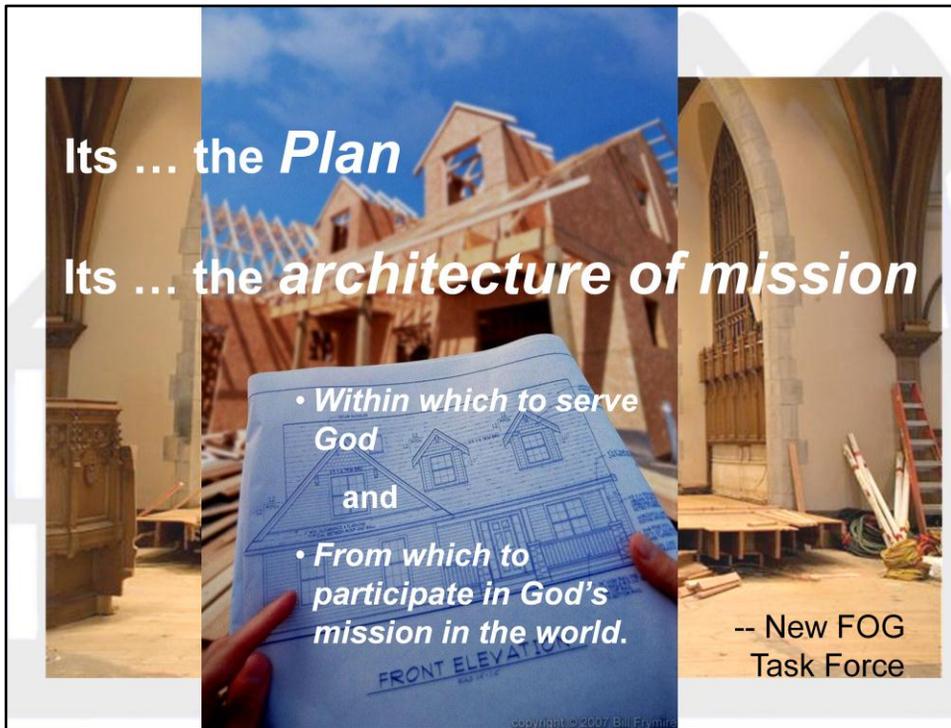
Pause to read the slide – and let these words *sink in*

At least you can see here that **polity** is not the work of the Church;

... participating in the mission God has for the church is the work of the Church.

**Polity** ... is how we *govern* our participation in God’s work.

Here is how people who proposed the “big change” for our polity (which we will consider in a while) look at this term ...



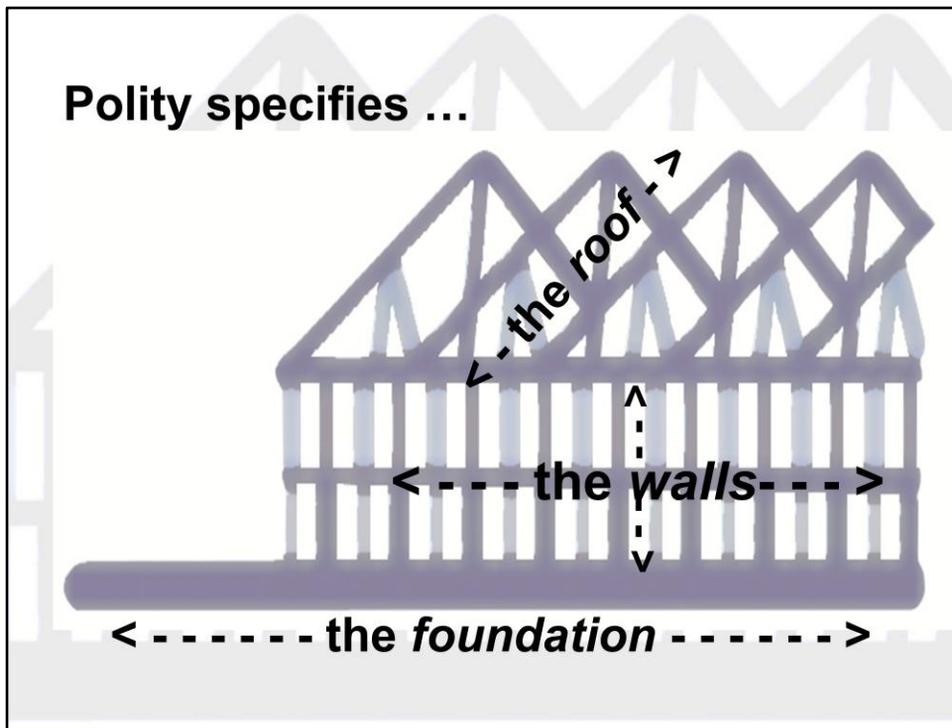
The New Form Of Government Task Force defines **polity** for us with this analogy:

- **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** – or the **architecture** – of 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*.

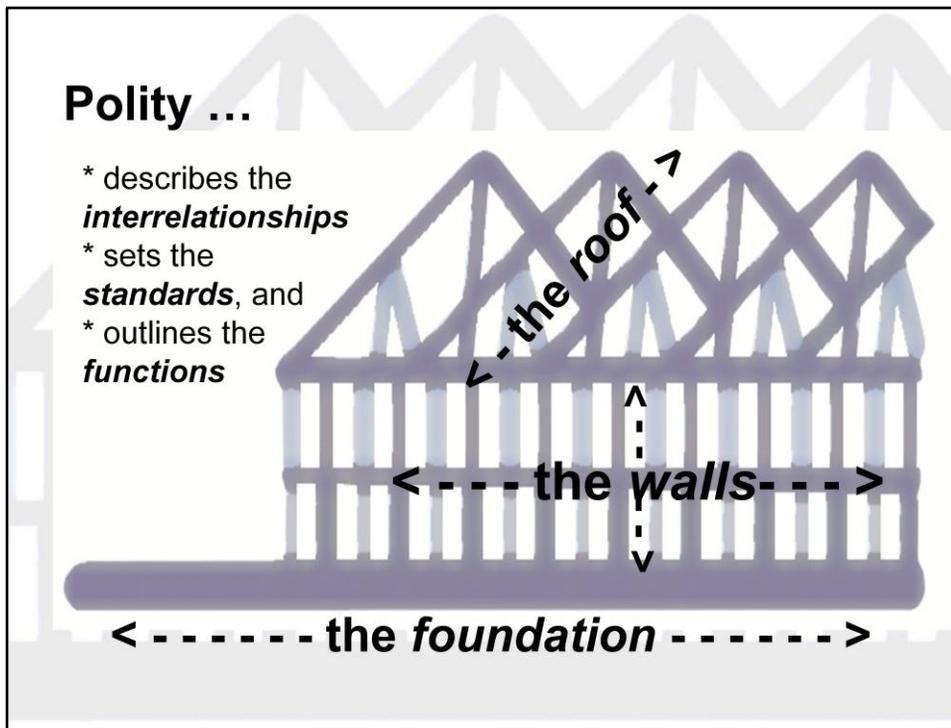


Like any good architecture ... any good blueprint ... **polity specifies --**

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

the *height and width of our ecclesiastical walls*, and

the *pitch of our covenantal roof*...



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, **Polity** should leave to individual councils the decisions about

- what practices best serve those interrelationships,
- what processes best produce ministry outcomes to meet those standards, and
- what structures best perform those functions.



*But - leaves  
the interior  
design ...to the  
occupants*

Polity should mandate:

- **roles not community,**
- **standards not processes,**
- **functions, not structures**



... in this analogy, **polity** describes the building we live in – but leaves to us the arrangement of the furniture in our own rooms.

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 organization into a faith community**.

To put it succinctly, polity should mandate –

- The **roles we play** – but, **not** the **community** of our lives as we fulfill them,
- The **standards** by which we measure our ministries – but, **not** the **processes** we use locally to do them,
- The **functions** that are necessary to have a church – but, **not** the **structures** we use locally to make them work.

If all of this analogy stuff is too abstract ... **Let's get personal!**



**Lets get *personal* about Polity**

**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 with others into a  
**SYNOD**, which is organized with others into the  
**DENOMINATION** – the Presbyterian Church (USA)

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

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church – and I hope that you have a direct and personal relationship with Him. You work directly for the CEO of His church and so do all of your brothers and sisters in Christ. The church does not stand between you and Jesus ... between you and God ... between you and the Holy Spirit.

**It helps you build your relationship with the Triune Him –**

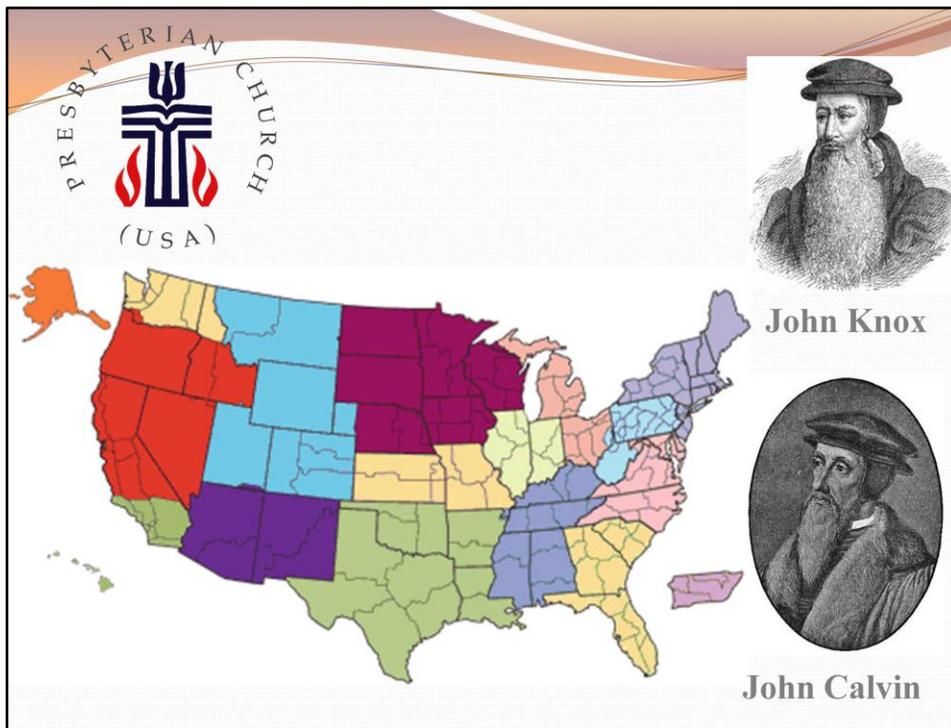
**... and organize your accomplishment of His work for you –**

**... with and for 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.



And here is our denomination in whole, grown from 1706 and out of the polity heritage of these two “Johns” -

**2+ million** members in **10,751** congregations.

From an organizational / governance perspective, that is:

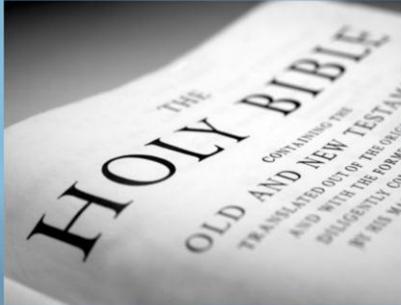
**10,751** Sessions, **173** Presbyteries, **16** Synods, and the General Assembly.

By the way -- according to Wikipedia (which sources the PC(USA) website), our total "communicant" membership fell by 2.9% in 2009 (the latest year for which statistics are available) to 2,077,138, the largest loss since 1975. This continues a three decade-long decline in membership for PC(USA) – and (sadly) it is consistent with the trends of most mainline Protestant denominations in America since the late 1960s.

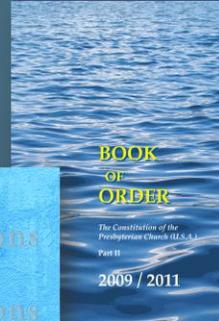
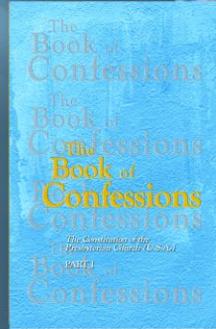
The average Presbyterian Church has 195 members (the mean in 2009) - about 48% of the congregations reporting membership of 100 or fewer members. Average worship attendance is 51.7% of membership. The largest PC(USA) congregation is Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia, with a reported membership of 8,989 (2009).

Most PC(USA) members are white (92.9%). Other racial and ethnic members include African-Americans (3.1% of the total membership of the denomination), Asians (2.3%), Hispanics (1.2%), Native Americans (0.2%), and all others (0.3%). Despite declines in the total membership of the PC(USA), the percentage of racial-ethnic minority members has stayed about the same since 1995. The ratio of female members (58%) to male members (42%) has also remained stable since the mid-1960s.

# Where is this all written down?



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



That's nice.

How has that worked out for us?

Well – where is all this “polity” written down?

Absorb screen...

... well – in the Holy Bible. Not very systematically, though, that is the work of our Constitution, which is in two books: *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.

But we Presbyterians love to write this stuff down, so our Constitution specifies that Manuals of Operation be written for GA , the Synods, and for the presbyteries to further explain how we govern at those levels. Your church has written it down, too – in your civil Articles of Incorporation, its corporation’s bylaws, and in the policies and manuals of operation for your Session and Deaconate, too.

Starting with Early American Presbyterianism, our Constitution was pretty much the way our two Johns wrote the original for the Church of Scotland.

But, lets bring three important details into the discussion as we look at our American Presbyterian Polity History:



America has always been the great “melting pot” and the great world bastion of religious freedom of worship. Here is a neat arrangement of some of their symbols – eh?

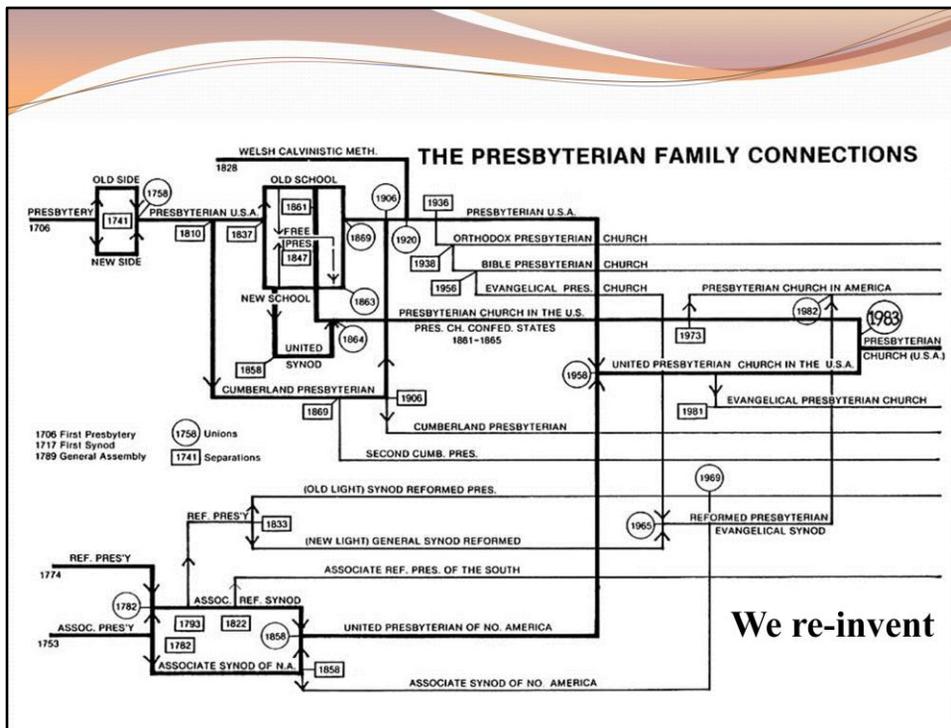
I’ve heard that wherever a Scot landed in America, he started a Church *and a college*.

And when the second Scot arrived, he started another – of each!

After enough of these Scots started enough churches they grouped into Presbyteries – and they became *Presbyterian* (you can’t be a Presbyterian church without presbyteries).

Note on the right of this slide, that there were at least three distinct, but recognizable denominational presbyteries formed before the American Revolution! In our PCUSA heritage (the top one), the first presbytery formed in 1706, the first Synod in 1717, and the first General Assembly was held in 1789.

But, over our nearly 300 year history -- see what we American Presbyterian denominations seem to do best ...



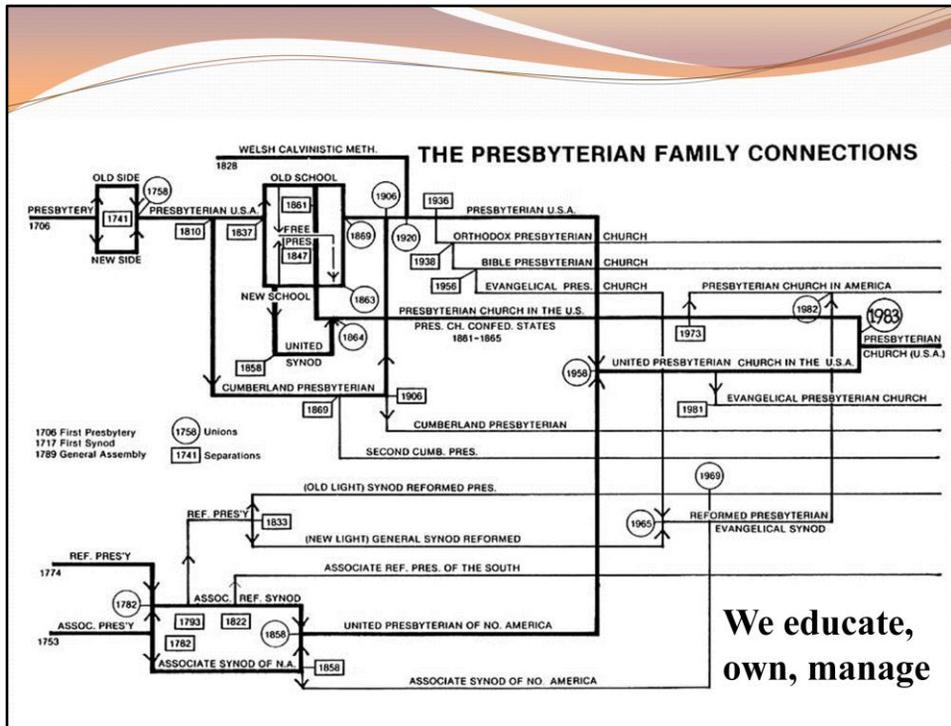
Aha! ... split and join – and re-split and re-join!

(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, joins, and jumps are on your personal Presbyterian path?)

So we have had a need to write new constitutions each time we join – and re-join – because at the point of a re-join, we become a “new” Presbyterian denomination!

As a result:

**Presbyterians in America have had a great deal of opportunity to re-invent how they govern their church.**



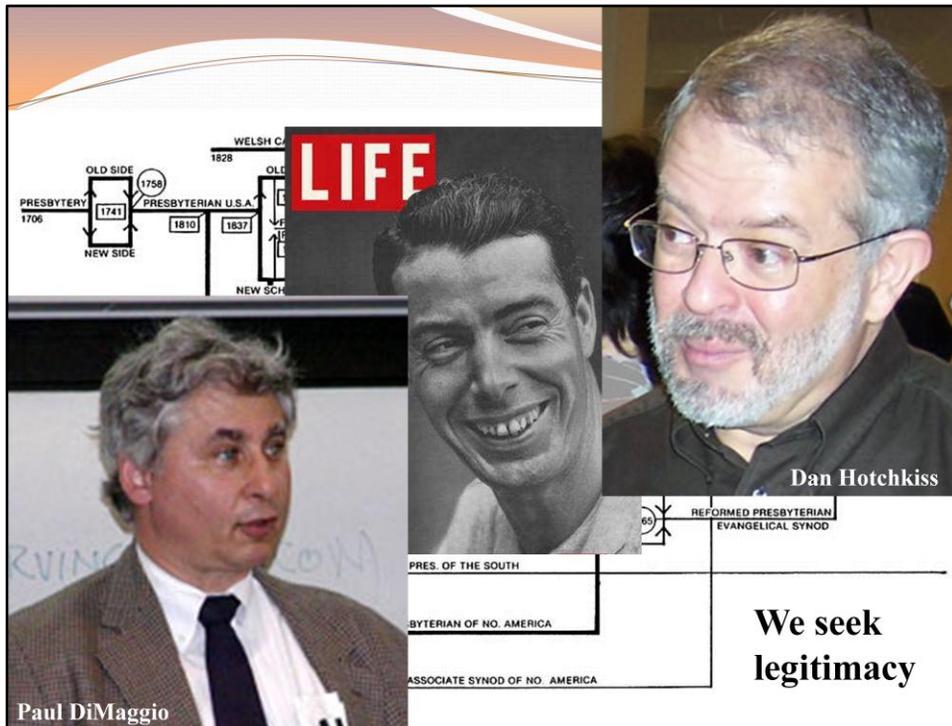
**Second**, remember those Scots starting all of those colleges? Presbyterians have always insisted on an educated clergy – especially in America.

In our first era of “constitutional confederacy” the most dominant conflict in the confederation of Presbyterians was over the legitimacy of ministers and their educational standards – whether framed as an educational issue from the side of those advocating formal education at legitimate colleges – or - weighed as a revivalist zeal issue on the side of those advocating for the approval of ministers who displayed fervor and piety but lacked formal education. In fact, this conflict led to the first major American Presbyterian split in the “Old Side – New Side” controversy of the 1740s (see the upper left corner of the chart).

But, it also produced most of our great Ivy league schools today – which began as ... Presbyterian seminaries.

And who else attended these educational institutions? People of wealth, power, and leadership in America.

**Demographically, Presbyterians (and especially, Presbyters) in America have always tended toward being - or rubbing shoulders very closely with - those who own, operate, and/or manage American business and industry.**



Which brings us to a **third** factor: **The intense Presbyterian desire for legitimization in the eyes of the ambient culture.** This one also goes back to the very first days of Presbyterianism in colonial America - we struggled even then to form an identity as a church with legitimizing standards within (and maybe counter to) this new world environment of religious toleration - an environment with church forms everywhere from a monolithic hierarchy -- to association through name only -- to no association at all! But, lets not be too harsh on the Presbyterians for this ...

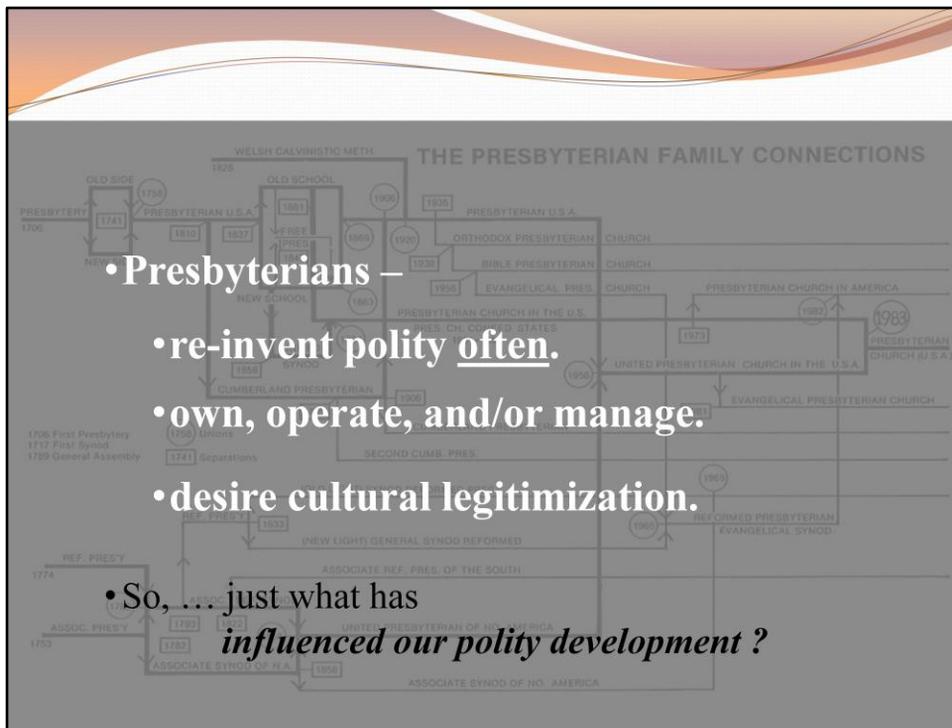
**Paul DiMaggio** (that is *Paul* , the Princeton sociologist - not *Joe*, the more famous Yankees centerfielder) observes:

... institutions developed in different fields within a culture [but] in the same period -- will assume *remarkably similar shapes*.

Alban Institute senior consultant, **Dan Hotchkiss** notes that religious institutions borrow organizational forms from the society around them all the time –**often shaped more by cultural influences than biblical influences.** For example, none of these familiar organizational forms is mandated by Scripture:

- the early church was organized like a Hellenistic mystery cult, the medieval church resembled monarchy, New England Puritans cloned the structure of an English town. The most important influences on the structure of the

contemporary American church or synagogue date from the 19th century, when the ***nonprofit corporation*** emerged as an all-purpose container for benevolent work.



So with these three factors in mind,

- **Presbyterians in America have had a great deal of opportunity to re-invent how they govern their church.**
- **Presbyterians (and especially, Presbyters) in America have always owned, operated, and/or managed American industry.**
- **The Presbyterian have always had an intense desire for legitimization in the eyes of the ambient culture.**

... if we want to understand our polity, the question becomes: what has *influenced the development of the polity of God's Church On Earth – in America?*

The Bible? – or the surrounding organizational culture?

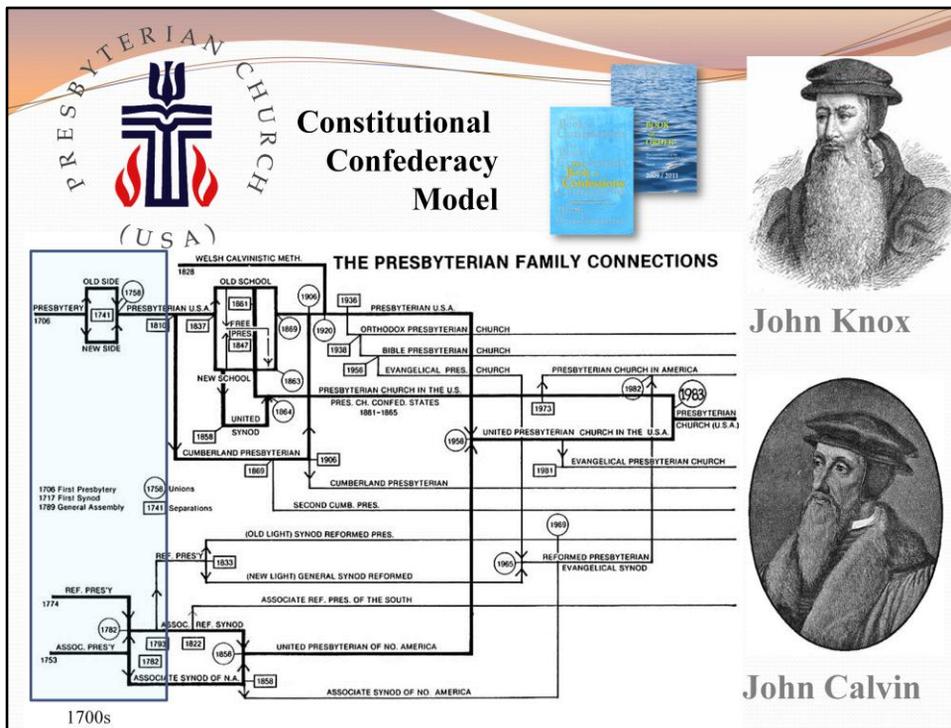
The collage includes the following elements:

- Top Left:** A portrait of John Knox, a Scottish Reformer, with the text "John Knox" below it.
- Top Center:** The Presbyterian Church (USA) logo, featuring a stylized cross with a flame at the top and the text "PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)".
- Top Right:** A portrait of Cynthia Bolbach, a woman with glasses and a green shirt, with the text "Cynthia Bolbach" below it.
- Bottom Left:** A portrait of John Calvin, a French theologian, with the text "John Calvin" below it.
- Bottom Right:** A portrait of Grady Parsons, a man with glasses and a suit, with the text "Grady Parsons" below it.
- Center:** A complex organizational chart titled "THE PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS" showing the relationships between various Presbyterian denominations and their historical roots.

In one of the MGB Connect white paper resources (see <http://oga.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/>), Craig Dykstra and James Hudnut-Beumler’s study (The National Organizational Structures of Protestant Denominations: An Invitation to a Conversation) is used to illuminate the historical progression of American Presbyterian polity, tracing the evolution of the polity of American protestant denominations from “Constitutional Confederacy” model, to the “Corporation” model, to the “Regulatory Agency” model of the last 40 years. We Presbyterians are that – on steroids! I am going to “borrow heavily” from this paper, here (as I have already).

I know that it is not really fair to lay the current composition of our Constitution on the backs of our denomination’s Moderator and Stated Clerk, but they do have nice pictures – eh? Besides, I couldn’t get a good group picture of all the people who have had a hand in writing – and revising our Constitutions over the last few hundred years – so these two will have to do. Given a chance to speak to us here, by the way, they would both advocate the New FOG, the changes proposed for the *BOO* (in whatever form it may take), and the Confession of Belhar– their intent being to get past the “cumbersomness” of the current FOG and some of its divisive content, as they might be expressed for and to these modern times.

Lets have a look at those last two centuries of polity development in American protestant churches – especially, ours.

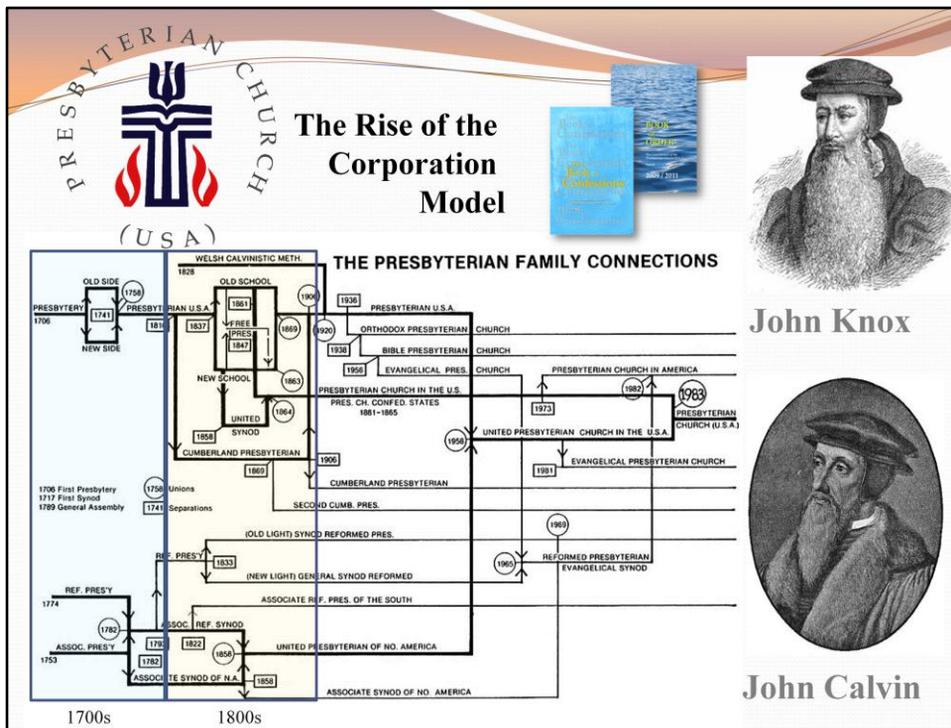


### The Constitutional Confederacy Model

The early years - after the American Revolution - produced a new crisis for churches: they could no longer look to their lands of origin for leadership and governance. Craig and James describe the American denominational organizations as “constitutional confederations” because they were formed around constitutions – but of a type quite limited in its scope and whose standards were doctrinal or confessional statements. For Presbyterians, these were the Westminster Confession, adopted in 1789 (with some new-world modifications) both as the *Standard of Faith* and a *Form of Government* by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, (which, by the way, is the root of our denomination).

These “constitutional confederations” were neither bureaucracies nor program agencies. Their motivating issues were primarily “*ministerial succession, guidance, and governance*” and their were no other resources expectations beyond meeting these few practical needs of their congregations through a minimalist structure. Note that although U.S. constitutional development (at the same time) created the permission and framework for strong, central governmental agencies, none were formed (i.e., at the time, no one even imagined creating a Department of Health, Education & Welfare in the fledgling Federal government -- or a National Board of Home Missions or Christian Education within the denomination, for that matter).

But, this confederacy model yielded to a two stage evolution leading to the rise of a corporate model of the robust and programmatic American denomination over the next century.

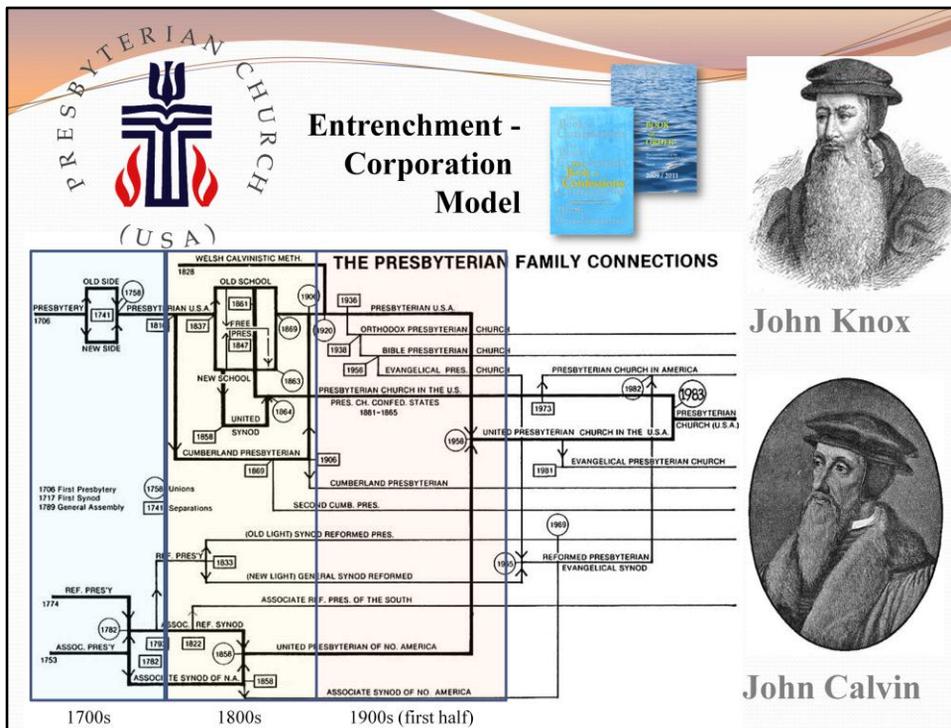


## Rise of the Corporation Model

The **first stage** in the evolution toward the corporate model was **the rise of religious voluntary associations** in the 19th century, gathered around perceived societal needs that the American Protestant church was not meeting through its denominations - issues such as: opposition to slavery, prohibition of alcohol, distribution of tracts and Bibles, and the propagation of home and foreign missions. These societies were not denominational. They crossed both denominational and faith tradition lines. Thus the ecclesiastical form of choice in the antebellum period was a weak central church government with a modest set of responsibilities - coupled with a wide range of loosely related societies for Christian endeavors. So, too, in American culture. Note the lack of a nationally embraced central bank system and even the absence of a nationally standardized time system until the railroads implemented the first system in 1883. (The U.S. Standard Time Act was finally adopted in 1918 – 35 years later!).

Indeed, by the turn of the century, we see the **second stage – technology** -- bringing changes in communication, transportation, and production which, in turn, gave rise to **national systems of centralized production and distribution**. Trusts, collectives, and, above all, vertically integrated corporations began to blossom -- radio, telegraph, telephone, railroad, and mass production were societal shapers whose problem-approach concepts also became available to the church.

Should we be surprised that religious denominations, led by clergy and business elites accustomed to thinking in the organizational forms of their time, should reorganize themselves on lines parallel to the worlds of business and government? After all, American society was increasingly inclined to look for national solutions to the problems of regional inconsistencies like the standardization of time zones across the transcontinental railway system. The cultural stage was set for the development of religious denominations as corporations.

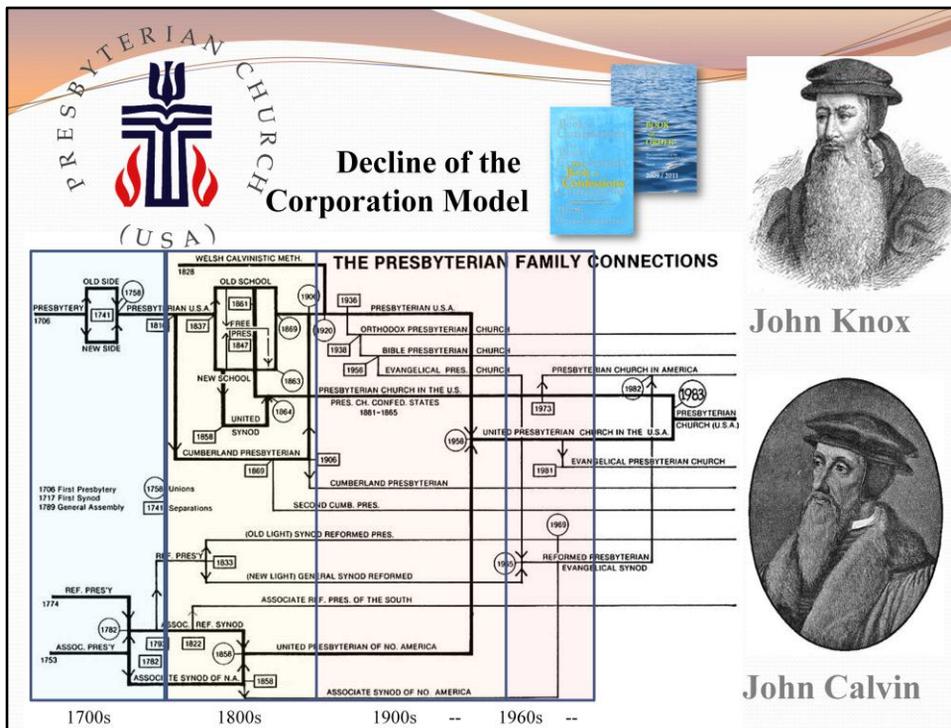


### Entrenchment of the Corporation Model

For both practical and ideological (but not theological) reasons, by 1900 the die had been cast for a corporate-bureaucratic model that would characterize national level American Protestantism for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Just as corporations provided goods and services to the secular consuming community, the modern denomination was no exception, bringing the work of the various independent, voluntary associations under centralized, national, and denominational control: Sunday School curricula, denominational periodicals, and national resources for church architecture, insurance, and pension programs became centralized and administered through national offices.

Management of substantial foreign mission dollars drove centralization of these programs. Like today, foreign missions funding was easier to raise than domestic program dollars, so centralizing all denominational programs, including foreign missions, provided a consolidated income base to fund the growing spectrum of denominational services. Early the 20<sup>th</sup> century, denominational assemblies and national conventions acted like stockholders' meetings where the "stockholders" would vote on materials already prepared by denominational staff. National boards and councils were served by male pastors and lay leaders of the large and wealthy congregations, very much like the boards of directors of corporations in the business world. This corporate model was very well received and appreciated by the church

across the denominations – for Presbyterians, by the mid-50s the paid subscription list of *Presbyterian Life* magazine exceeded one million, surpassing *Newsweek*.



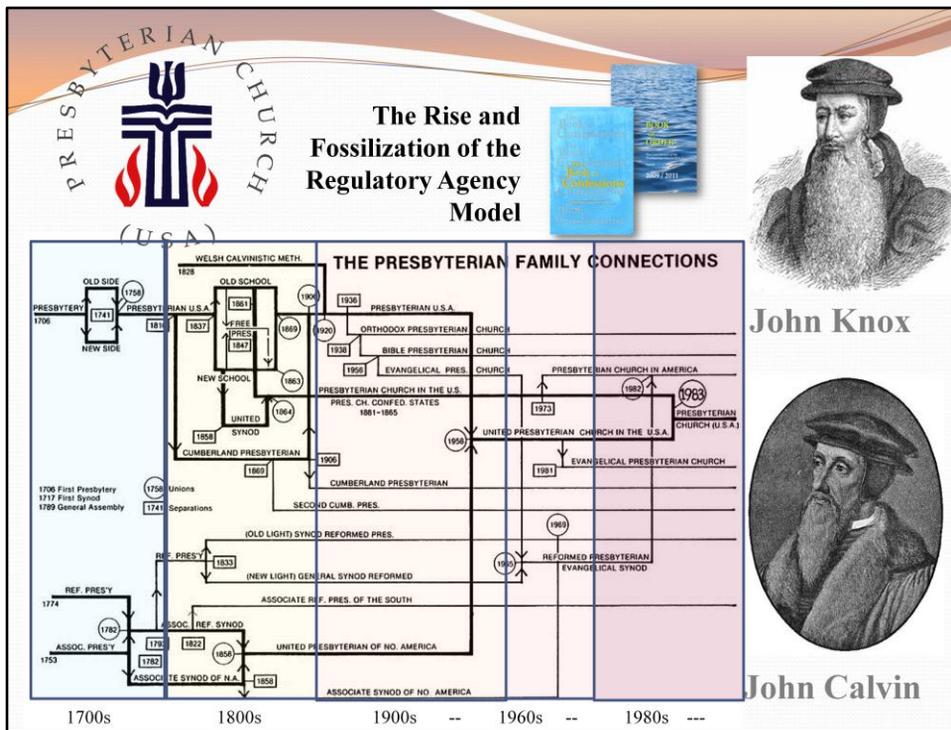
## Decline of the Corporation Model

The 1960s (remember them?); however, saw the corporate model's effectiveness begin to decline – eroded by the major questions and turmoil that were then sweeping American society:

- **The rise of the “I’m entitled” generation** demanding resolutions to affinity groups’ issues *by someone else*,
- **Global mission activity patterns began to change** as American denominations became increasingly aware of their historic tendency of cultural imperialism in their relations to other countries and cultures, and ...
- The mid-60’s **end of the postwar baby boom**. Sunday School attendances hit their peaks; but, membership levels soon began a steady - and continuing - decline. In less than a generation, religious giving began to decrease at a time when denominational bureaucracies had swelled in the wake of the robust and enthusiastic growth of the 1950s - beginning a vicious cycle of “shrinking-dollar”-driven cuts to popular services and greater membership dissatisfaction.

The reduction of services provided by the national denominational offices - and the precipitous fracturing of national consensus over what types of services should be offered - contributed to the rise of special interest consultants and advocacy organizations in this period. In the face of more open conflict over ideological and theological agendas, post-1960s American society saw a tremendous rise in the

number and kinds of affinity and special-interest groups in general. And sure enough - these types of groups also caught on within denominations, too. Within the Presbyterian Church, some of these groups organized to meet perceived needs not met by the denomination's program, and others were actually formed to purposely oppose the denomination's programs and positions!



## The Rise and Fossilization of the Regulatory Agency Model

The national denominational structure (overall, the largest and most expensive bureaucracy the church had ever known) was competing with these special interest groups for the now *limited and declining* pool of financial resources. Craig and James observe: *“when denominational leaders find they no longer have adequate educational resources or persuasive powers to influence social and ecclesiastical change, they attempt to mandate it through regulation.”*

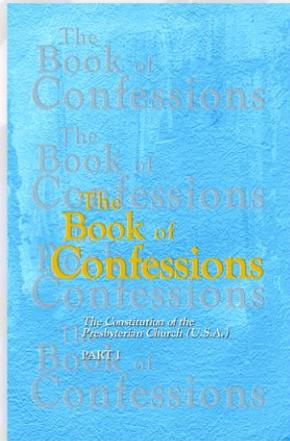
Conflict and disappointment bred and flourished when, in an increasingly pluralistic world, denominational policies reflected political and theological agendas that represented the desires and values of some particular segments *but not the whole church*. Conflict and frustration bloomed when the regulatory church *mandated practices that neither the denomination nor its grassroots could afford*. (The “unfunded mandate” eventually becomes a sign of the regulatory model - failing.) These growing, institutional regulatory habits were presided over by bureaucrats in a bureaucracy that took on a life of its own and sought to preserve itself as an institution.

All of these polity changes – large and small, radical and incremental - were institutionalized in the Constitutions of Presbyterian polities. And change continues. In just the three decades since the 1983 re-join of the *Presbyterian Church in the U.S.*

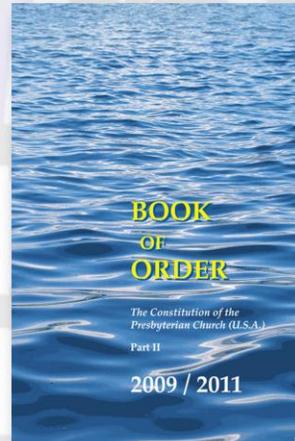
and the *United Presbyterian Church in the USA* - that resulted in our denomination (and its new Constitution), we have seen over 300 amendments to all of the parts of our *Book of Order* and the addition of our eleventh confession, **A Brief Statement of Faith** (commemorating the 1983 re-join) to our Book of Confessions.

# The PC(USA) Constitution

## Part One



## Part Two



So ... We've been there! We've done that! And we've done it in spades! And now, here we are ... again.

The PC(USA) Constitution is our current denominational **polity**. 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 and specifically-crucial 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

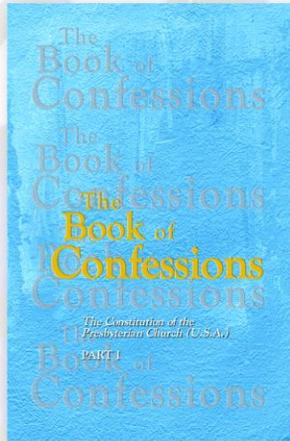
how we enforce our polity.

Our Synod, our Presbytery, and your local governance documents (the Manuals of Operation – and the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of your Congregation and of your Session and perhaps your Deaconate – i.e., your local **polity**) reflect our Constitution extensively – with paraphrase, direct quotes, and/or by reference.

# The PC(USA) Constitution

---

Part One



The  
Nicene  
Creed

...

A Brief  
Statement  
of Faith

**The Book of Confessions**, the theological polity part – is a collection of eleven creeds, confessions, and statements – 313 pages long - that define our theological heritage as Reformed and Presbyterian Christians.

These confessions stretch from the Nicene 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 Nicene Creed

The Apostles' Creed

The Scots Confession

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Second Helvetic Confession

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The Larger Catechism

The Shorter Catechism

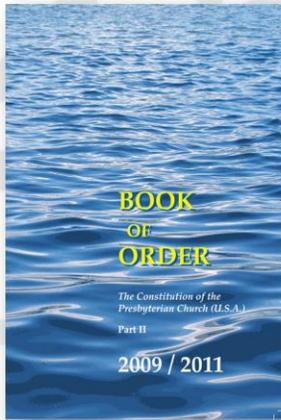
The Theological Declaration of Barmen

The Confession of 1967

A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

# The PC(USA) Constitution

---



Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

Our 495 page *Book of Order* has three parts:

The **Form of Government**, which describes the essential tenets of our faith (in the first four chapters) ... and our church's system of governance: the interrelationships, standards and processes, and function (in the remaining fourteen chapters) – all together 162 pages of these 495,

The **Directory for Worship**, which provides required standards and suggested process aspects of our worship life (in its seven Chapters) – the next 80 pages of the 495,

And the **Rules of Discipline**, which outlines the standards and process for resolving disputes within the life of our church (in its fourteen Chapters and seven Appendices) – the next 170 pages of the 495.

Leaving the last 80 pages for the *Book of Order's* end notes (scriptural references footnoted in the text) and the index to the whole *BOO*. Even the acronyms are instructive – our **governance** is “**the FOG**” (well, yes to many); our directory of corporate **worship, the DOW** (hmmm – remember the note about environmental influences?); and, if a dispute arises, we **resolve** it with (you guessed it) “the ROD”. Ok, I stretched the middle one; but, had you going there, didn't I?

## Hallmarks of Decision-making

- ... **governed by representative bodies** composed of presbyters ...
- ... jurisdiction ... **limited** by the express provisions of the Constitution
- ... **“God alone is Lord of the conscience,”**
- ... **Holy Scriptures are the only rule** of faith and manners ... **no Church governing body ... to bind the conscience**
- ... a **majority** shall govern ... [appeals] finally decided by the **collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church.**

These are the hallmarks of decision making in our polity ...

Absorb the slide

The Presbyterian Church is **governed by representatives** who exercise a **limited authority** and who **vote their individual consciences**, rightfully prepared, discerning the will of God and that **the will of God is in the majority** (*scripturally prepared and expressed*).

### References:

G-9.0101 Definition The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be **governed by representative bodies** composed of presbyters, both elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament. These governing bodies shall be called: session, presbytery, synod, General Assembly.

G-9.0103 Unity of Governing Bodies All governing bodies of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The governing bodies are separate and independent, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate governing body. The

jurisdiction of each governing body is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, **with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries**, and with the acts of each subject to review by the next higher governing body.

G-1.0301 Right of Judgment (1) (a) That “**God alone is Lord of the conscience**, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.” (Westminster Confession Ch XX or XXII, par 2) –

G-1.0307 Church Power (7) That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that **the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners**; that **no Church governing body** ought to pretend to make laws **to bind the conscience** in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

**G-1.0400 4. The Historic Principles of Church Government** The radical principles of Presbyterian church government and discipline are:

That the several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church; that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller, or determine matters of controversy which arise therein; that, in like manner, a representation of the whole should govern and determine in regard to every part, and to all the parts united: that is, that a **majority shall govern**; and consequently that appeals may be carried from lower to higher governing bodies, till they be finally decided by the **collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church**. For these principles and this procedure, the example of the apostles and the practice of the primitive Church are considered as authority.

## OK, how does this affect me?

Recall your vows as church officers ...

There are 11 vows of ...

- Sensitivity to the Word of God *in your life* ...
- Obedience to God *in your life* ...
- Following Christ *in your life* ...
- Leading and developing His people, and ...
- Exhibiting the Kingdom of God to the world *in your life* ...

... and **as you lead God's Church**

So, how does this affect me? Well -- recall your vows as Presbyters of the church ...

Absorb the slide

### References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons – Do you / Will you ...

- trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church
- accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be God's Word to 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,
- be instructed and led by those confessions
- fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions
- be governed by our church's polity, and abide by its discipline
- be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit
- in your own life follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world
- further the peace, unity, and purity of the church

- to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love
- (For **elder**) be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service -- share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry show the love and justice of Jesus Christ
- (For **minister** of the Word and Sacrament) be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people -- be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry show the love and justice of Jesus Christ
- (For **commissioned lay pastor**) be a faithful commissioned lay pastor, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry show the love and justice of Jesus Christ

## OK, what do we have to decide?

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

- Part 1 Replace FOG with “New FOG” – in the Book of Order
- Part 2 Add the Confession of Belhar– to the Book of Confessions
- Part 3 Approve 15 content Amendments to the Book of Order

OK, with that as background, what do we have to decide in our next Presbytery meeting?

The 219<sup>th</sup> GA voted to refer these items to the Presbyteries for vote.

Absorb the slide

## OK, how might this affect us?

If passed, these could/would change our **polity**:

- How we generally *express and standardize* the way we govern,
- What we Confess our Faith to be, and
- The **standards of our leadership** and 14 other things.

Here is the potential impact of these items -- if they are approved by the presbyteries.

Absorb the slide

So, is it important that we understand them and their implications for our church?  
You bet!

Well, then, lets look at these three proposed changes to our polity – and then examine how we should prepare to vote on them in our March Presbytery.

Lets begin by understanding how we change the various parts of the Constitution of our denomination:

## How will the PC(USA) decide these?

Chapter 18 of our Book of Order ...

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) would be faithful to the Lordship of Christ and to its historic tradition of the Church reformed always reforming, by the Spirit of God.

In this faith, amendment procedures are understood as a means to faithfulness as God breaks forth yet more light from God's Word.

Chapter 18 of our *Book of Order* directs how we amend our Constitution.

It opens with these principals :

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) would be **faithful to**

- **the Lordship of Christ** and to
- **its historic tradition** of the Church ...

**“... reformed always reforming, by the Spirit of God.”**

In this faith, amendment procedures themselves are

- understood as a ***means to faithfulness***
- as ***God breaks forth yet more light from God's Word.***

Amendments are not light things and are not cultural things – they are ***theological*** things, ***matters of our faith*** -- as our faith matures in the light of God's Word.

G-18.0201

## Amendments to Confessional Documents

... made only in the following manner:

- (1) The approval of the proposed amendment by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;
- (2) The approval in writing of **two thirds of the presbyteries**;
- (3) The approval and enactment by the next ensuing General Assembly.

Amendments to the **Confessional Documents** are a three step process and are made only in the following manner:

- (1) The approval of the proposed amendment by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;

The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has done this with the Part 2, Book Of Confessions addition – the Confession of Belhar - that we will vote on in our Spring Presbytery.

- (2) The approval in writing of **two thirds of the presbyteries**;
- (3) The approval and enactment by the next ensuing General Assembly.

Frankly the office of the GA doesn't know what would happen if step three doesn't occur – it has never happened before!

**G-18.0301**

## **Amendments to the *Book of Order***

... made only in the following manner:

- a. All proposals ...communicated in writing ....
- b. ... for clarity, consistency, and compatibility ...
- c. ... approved by General Assembly / transmitted to the presbyteries for their vote.
- d. ... **majority** of all the presbyteries must approve.

**Amendments to the *Book of Order*...** are a four step process and are made only in the following manner:

- a. All proposals requesting amendment of the *Book of Order* shall be communicated in writing to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.
- b. The Stated Clerk shall refer all such proposed amendments to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (G-13.0112), which shall examine the proposed amendment for clarity and consistency of language and for compatibility with other provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The advisory committee shall report its findings to the General Assembly along with its recommendations, which may include an amended version of any proposed constitutional changes as well as advice to accept or decline the proposals referred to the committee. The General Assembly shall not consider any amendment until it has considered the report and any recommendation from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.
- c. Proposed amendments must be approved by the General Assembly and transmitted to the presbyteries for their vote.

These steps have been done for the Part 1 "New FOG" and the Part 3 *BOO*

content amendments that we will vote in the March Presbytery meeting.

d. Presbyteries shall transmit their votes to the Stated Clerk by the next ensuing stated meeting of the General Assembly, but no later than one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendments.

When the Stated Clerk has received written advice that a proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* has received the affirmative votes of a majority of all the presbyteries, said amendment shall become effective as of one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendment.

## How will Nevada Presbytery decide these?

- Study documents urge a *Communal Discernment*
- Nevada Presbytery's recent history suggests:
  - a time for personal preparation,
  - a time for communal discussion, and
  - a time for corporate decision.

You will find in the study materials, guides, and reports on these parts, that GA proposes a time of Communal Discernment on the docket in the Presbyteries' consideration of these amendments.

I have proposed to our Moderator and Stated Clerk (and our Presbytery Council has agreed) the same concepts and actions – but in a different process for considering the items we will vote - based on the success of our recent consideration of the SMP dissolution experience we have just had – and on the process we used successfully with the last batch of Amendments to our Constitution several presbytery meetings ago.

## Spring Presbytery @ GVPC

- Tuesday morning – an hour and a half devoted to a moderated, informal communal discussion of the three parts and construction of a consent agenda – no motions, or decisions.
- Tuesday afternoon as an Agenda Item:
  - Equipping Ministries brings the item and Part motions
  - The Moderator allows formal and constrained floor debate and decision of each part and item – leading to each vote – by ballot -- under Robert’s Rules of Order.

At our March Presbytery meeting, here is how that will look schedule-wise, ***with you all coming to Presbytery thoroughly studied and prepared to vote*** - of course!

**Equipping Ministries** will provide a time - 10:30 – noon - of informal; but, orderly, discussion before Presbytery actually begins -- to air the proposed amendments, share information regarding their declared intent and probable effect, and share the attending Presbyters’ arguments for and against.

And in the afternoon, once Presbytery is in session:

- **Equipping Ministries**, will sequentially bring each of the fifteen Part 3 amendment items - as part of its report and each item brought will be immediately followed by its consideration by Presbytery in a constrained, formal debate leading to its vote.
- **Our Moderator**, will enforce the constrained discussion - alternating Presbyters’ speeches “for” and “against”, of limited time, and limited in content (e.g., no repeat arguments).
- When the floor’s pro and con arguments on the item being considered are exhausted, **Presbytery will vote the item by ballot.**
- *When these 15 items have been voted, other committees’ will report their activities - not related to the amendments - as the Part 3 Item ballots are counted.*
- **Equipping Ministries**, will return to the floor and bring Part 1 and then Part 2 as parts of its report – each Part to be followed by its consideration, leading to its vote.

- Again, **our Moderator** will enforce a constrained discussion - alternating of “for” and “against” speeches, limited in length, and limited in content (i.e., no repeat arguments).
- Again, when the floor’s arguments on the Part being considered are exhausted, **Presbytery will vote the item by ballot.**
- ... *and, again, other reports will be heard not related to the amendments as the Parts 1 and 2 ballots are counted.*

Here are the *BOO* mechanical details of this process ...



**G-9.0302**  
**Parliamentary Procedure**

Meetings of governing bodies, commissions, and committees shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*, except in those cases where this Constitution provides otherwise.

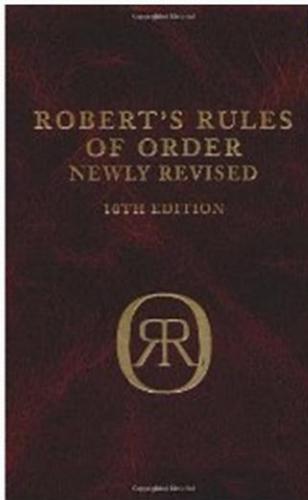
In paragraph **G-9.0302 Parliamentary Procedure** the *Book of Order* defines the voting process for these items:

Meetings of governing bodies, commissions, and committees shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*, except in those cases where this Constitution provides otherwise.

“This Constitution” is silent on “providing otherwise” for Presbyteries voting on items referred to it by GA for amending the Constitution. So too, is the Nevada Presbytery’s Manual of Operations and Policies.

Thankfully, G-9.0302 gives us Robert’s Rules ... and Robert’s gives us some guidance!

## *Parliamentary procedure is helpful when...*



- Dealing with routine organizational business
- An issue has near or full consensus
- **Clear alternatives have been identified and further discussion is not likely to surface more options**
- **Delaying a decision is not an option**
- **Participants are comfortable with parliamentary procedure**
- **The group is willing to accept majority rule when a common direction cannot be found**

Robert's Rules are particularly helpful for our situation – for these (**bolded**) reasons ...

Absorb slide

Admitting that these amendments are neither “routine organizational business” nor “issues that have near or full consensus,” the other reasons on this list overwhelm all other means of handling them.

Although there is a great deal of un-debated controversy surrounding the issues contained (or not contained) in many of these amendment items, what we have presented to us are simply straight up-or-down votes – with no amendments allowed. So frankly, we have few – but pretty clear - alternatives.

... with guidance from **The Tenth Edition**  
*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*

- **Equipping** brings each item to the floor as a “Main Motion” - no second required.
- Each item is a “perfected motion” – no amendments allowed.
- Each item is debated and voted separately – **simple majority is required for approval.**
- Results are reported to GA by our Stated Clerk.

So, lets see how these rules order the process to unfold on the floor of presbytery (at least procedurally) ...

- Equipping Ministries brings each item or Part to the floor of Presbytery as a part of their report - no “second” to any of these items is necessary because it is brought as part of a report.
- These items come as “perfected motions” – that is, **they can neither be amended nor revised** – they must be voted exactly as they have been referred to the presbyteries by the GA.
- Once on the floor, the item or Part may be debated -- if there are opinions on it to be expressed by the members of Presbytery who “have voice” at Presbytery.
- This debate may be constrained in the interests of time and fairness by the Moderator, as discussed above – and the Moderator may speak neither for nor against the motion on the floor.
- When the body is ready (i.e., the roughly equal number of “pro” and “con” non-repetitive speeches is exhausted), it shall vote.
- A **simple majority will prevail on every item** brought before the body – whether the item amends the Book of Confessions or the *Book of Order*.
- Without any further direction from the body, the Stated Clerk of Presbytery will record the vote on each of the 17 items and report these votes in writing to the Stated Clerk of General Assembly.

And that is how our Presbytery will decide these parts and their items.

**So ... How will I decide how to vote on each of these amendments (...you may be asking...)?**

## How will I decide these?

- **Well ... that is the question of today, isn't it?**
- Prayerful preparation for personal study
- Prayerful study of the materials
- Prayerful study with knowledgeable, mature Christians
- Know your conscience – and know the reasons why.

### **Well, that is the question of today, isn't it?**

My strong recommendation to you, our Presbyters, is to be thoroughly prepared for the consideration of these proposed amendments – well before you come to Presbytery in March.

That includes your personal and communal study between the end of this workshop and our March Presbytery meeting so we are prepared to consider them productively together when we get to Presbytery.

In the rest of the workshop we will explore these study recommendations and their tools:

- Prayerful preparation for personal Study
- Prayerful Study of the materials
- Prayerful Study with knowledgeable, mature Christians
- Know God's leading for your conscience – and the scriptural reasons why.

## What's all this about ... my conscience?

Whom do I Serve as a Presbyterian?

Whose Church is it anyway?

Do I have to invent my answer?

Have I already been told what to do?

### What's all this about ... my conscience?

Note that conscience has come up several times today. What have we learned about it as Presbyters so far?

Discuss

Whom do I Serve as a Presbyterian?

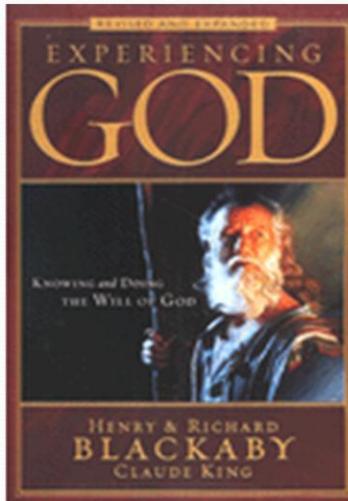
Whose Church is it anyway?

Do I have to invent my answer?

Have I already been told what to do?

It comes down to discerning God's will – not deciding – or - inventing some answer on *any other basis*.

## Tools for ... DISCERNING



- **God** pursues a continuing love relationship with you
- **God** is always at work around you – and He invites you to join Him in what He is doing
- **You** must make adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing ...



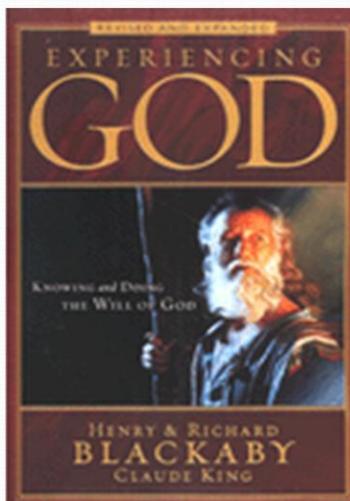
I am not here to sell you on Henry Blackaby's great study on discerning God's will – and we won't debate its merits here; but, *Experiencing God* is probably the best summary of the many biblical studies and courses out there on finding God's will in your life.

Henry notes that:

- **God** pursues a continuing love relationship with you – not because you are “good,” or have done anything “good,” or because you are even likable (!) – He does it for His own reasons. Maybe, its just because He made you and He loves you.
- **God** is always at work around you – and He invites you to join Him in what He is doing even though you are not perfect, or willing, even “ready.” (He takes care of all of those things, by the way.)
- But **you** must make adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing. You didn't really think that this would be easy, or require *nothing different* in your life, did you? “Make adjustment” indeed!

Thankfully, God doesn't just leave it at that! We can know Him, know His direction for each of us, and with that, follow Him and do His work!

## Tools for ... DISCERNING



God reveals Himself, His purposes,  
His ways – *by the Holy Spirit* --  
through:

...prayer  
...circumstances  
...counsel of mature Christians  
...the Church  
and ...**the Bible**

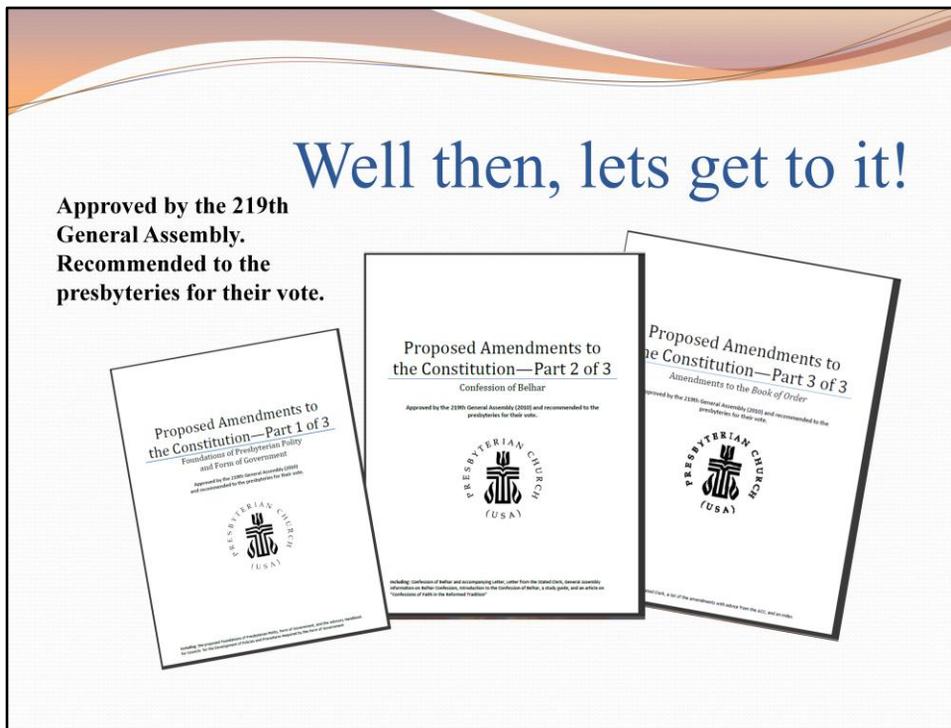
You come to know God through experience

God reveals to you - Himself, His purposes, and His ways (by the Holy Spirit) through:

... prayer  
... circumstances  
... counsel of mature Christians  
... the Church  
and ... **the Bible**

You will come to know God by experiencing Him -- as you obey Him -- and He  
accomplishes His work through ... you!

Amen!



Here are the three “Parts” of the proposed amendments to our Constitution:

- **Part 1 of 3 – Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government, 46 pages** -- plus 12 more pages describing the Advisory Handbooks made from material removed from the current Book of Order’s Form of Government section - for Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and meetings of GA use in their governance and (and modification to “local needs”). Also included with this booklet, is an eight page insert with the explanatory material so the “Part 1 of 3” can quickly stand beside the current Book of Order and be immediately useful in July this year if it passes before the reprint is available. 58 pages in all.
- **Part 2 of 3 – the Confession of Belhar, 3 pages** and its accompanying documents, the “Accompanying Letter” and the accompanying scriptural references to the confession (another 3 pages). If this proposal is adopted, these latter two documents are to be printed with it in the Book of Confessions; but, without confessional status. This Part also includes the explanatory material and recommendation for adding this confession to the Book of Confessions. With the study helps, 24 pages in all.
- **Part 3 of 3 – Amendments to the *Book of Order*** Fifteen separately proposed amendments to the Form of Government, Directory of Worship, and Rules of Discipline parts of the current Book of Order; and with each of them their background and rationale for approval and some notes and committee and GA voting statistics. Again with study helps, 32 pages in all.

## Before you begin study ...

- Attend this workshop! ... (and stay awake)
- Pray for an open mind ... clarity of purpose ... active engagement throughout your study process
- Set aside a comfortable study place and enough un-interrupted study time. You have 114 pages to read.

**So, here is what I recommend:**

**Before you begin your study ...**

Attend this workshop! ... (and stay awake)

Pray for an open mind ... clarity of purpose ... active engagement throughout your study process

Set aside a comfortable study place and enough un-interrupted study time.

In these three parts, **you have 114 pages of new, proposed material to study.**

## Get into your study place and ...

- **Pray** for God's guidance as you read the presented material
- **Read the proposed amendments** – and then read their explanatory material - in and suggested in their Study Guides
- *I suggest:* Read/Study **Part 3** first, then **Part 2**, and last **Part 1**
  - In Part 1, read the Advisory Handbook stuff first (pages 47 – end)
  - Read the advice on how to engage the Part (Insert item 2, pages 5-6)
  - ... and then, Read the Foundations and the New FOG
- Read the language of each amendment – then read its accompanying explanation, rationale, and help material – **then stop for the day!**

**Pray** for God's guidance as you read the presented material.

**Read the proposed amendments** – and then their explanatory material in and suggested in their Study Guides

I suggest: Read/Study **Part 3** first, then **Part 2**, and last - **Part 1**.

This will start you at the smallest level of change – the paragraph or even sentence level - and bring you to a new whole confession addition and finally a whole book swap-out – clearly the biggest levels. Today, we will review them in the 1, 2, 3 order (biggest level to smallest level) and I think that you will see why it is best to get the detail part of your study out of the way first.

When you study Part 1, I think it is best to start with the proposed Advisory Handbook content stuff first so you have a feel for what won't be there when you read the rest.

Read the language of each amendment – then read its accompanying explanation and help material.

Read with a pen in hand – mark the book or keep notes somewhere else on the questions or objections that arise - as you encounter them.

If you still have questions or objections remaining after you have read the accompanying explanation material **or have even more questions or objections (!)**, you have some more searching to do -- later.

Then stop here, think and sleep on what you have read. Trust me, your brains will be fried.

## ... find some more helps

- There are good helps in accompanying material – online versions give click-on references.
- The New FOG Insert suggests two good cross-references:
- <http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/comp-chart1.pdf> and
- <http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/comp-chart2.pdf>
- ... and much more!

The accompanying material gives a pretty good list of helps to clarify the amendments and their explanations and recommendations.

The New FOG Insert suggests two particularly helpful cross-references:

1. Comparison Chart: *Proposed* Foundations and Form of Government to *Current* Form of Government (<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/comp-chart1.pdf> )
2. Comparison Chart: *Current* Form of Government to *Proposed* Foundations and Form of Government (<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/comp-chart2.pdf> )

### **Additional resources:**

Frequently asked questions (<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/FAQ-sept-09.pdf> )

What Is Missional Ecclesiology?

(<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/missional-ecclesiology09.pdf> ) by Paul Hooker, a minister member of the task force.

A letter to PC(USA) elders (<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/hunley-elder-ltr-sept-09.pdf>) from Carol Hunley, a task force member who is a ruling elder.

A brief reflection on the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

(<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/on-mtg-new-fog-chapman.htm>) by noted author William Chapman.

Form of Government PowerPoint Presentation (I already lifted the good stuff from this one and presented it to you today). The Form of Government Task Force presented this to the Assembly Committee on the Form of Government Revision at the 219th General Assembly (2010).

## ... find some more helps

- The Confession of Belhar Part 2 Study Guide suggests the committee material for further study:

<http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3353&promoID=174>

(... takes a while to load)

And <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession-study-guide/> - for the underlying *A Study of the Belhar Confession and Its Accompanying Letter* by Eunice T. McGarrahan.

In the transmittal letter, Grayde Parsons, the Stated Clerk of GA, notes:

You will note that reference is made to Item 16-12. That indicates the assembly committee report related to Confession of Belhar. This item number also indicates where to find background information from various entities that was available electronically to the assembly commissioners prior to the General Assembly. (That information may now be accessed at <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3353&promoID=174>.) The —Item Number references are the same as will be found in the Minutes of the 219th General Assembly (2010), Part I [Minutes].

These are at: <http://oga.pcusa.org/ogaresources/journal2010.pdf> and they are a large file (over 62MB) taking a long time to load!

## ... find some more helps

- The proposed Amendments to the *Book of Order* (Part 3) Study Guide suggests the committee material for further study:  
<http://www.pc-biz.org> then click on “Committees” on the tool bar
- The specific committee report URL for each Item is located at the end of the treatment of each Item in the Part 3 study guide
- And – there is always Google!

In the transmittal letter, Grayde again notes:

You will note that reference is made to item numbers that indicate the assembly committee reports related to each proposed amendment. These item numbers also indicate where to find background information from various entities that was available electronically to the assembly commissioners prior to the General Assembly. That information may now be accessed at <http://www.pc-biz.org>, then click on Committees.

The “Item Number” references are the same as will be found in the *Minutes of the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010)*, Part I [*Minutes*], (see my previous slide)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) can be found immediately following the item in the *Minutes* for which the advice is given.

Now (finally) lets have a look at the 17 proposed amendments -- in these three parts – beginning with Part 1 ...



To order this part of the workshop, I will use a few slides here you may have seen before -- the Reverend Sharron Stanley shared them with us in her report to the Fall Presbytery about the 210<sup>th</sup> GA 2010 in Minneapolis MN – which she attended as a commissioner.

Although Sharron was a commissioner to GA from her home Presbytery of San Joachin in our Synod - and is a regular attender of the Nevada Presbytery, you may know her better as the founder and Executive director of the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Mission (FIRM).

Along with Sharron, our Presbytery had quite a contingent of our own commissioners and observers there this past summer – and several of them also reported their observations to us at our Fall Presbytery meeting, as many of us recall – but, I am using Sharron’s observations here because she was generous enough to share them with me (as the others also did) -- and because she reported with PowerPoint . Copying her wonderful PowerPoint slides is really easy!

# 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 on the first part of the referred Amendments ...

(In the picture is Elder JoAnn Poncho, one of our Nevada Presbytery commissioners to GA and a member of Valley PC, Bishop, California)

(Absorb the slide content)

By the way, in the New FOG *newspeak*, the term “Councils” replaces “middle governing bodies” – referring to presbyteries and synods.

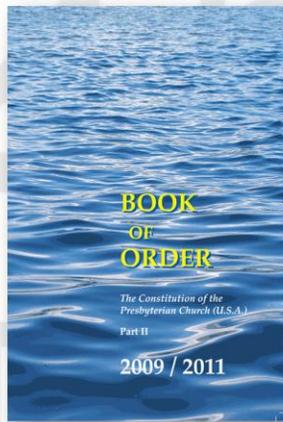
Remember from our *Book of Order*, Chapter XVIII discussion:

- At the denominational level .... *Book of Order* amendments – even one as extensive as this - require affirmative votes from **87** of the presbyteries to pass -- a simple majority of the presbyteries.
- At the Presbytery level, they require a simple majority of the attending and voting Presbyters to form their Presbytery’s vote.
- (So, as a matter of practicality (and mathematics), abstention is a “no” vote.)
- And, if approved, they are effective one year from the last day of the referring GA’s meeting (i.e., on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2011).

Now lets look at the Part 1 amendment.

# The PC(USA) Constitution

---



Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

Recall, our Book of Order has three parts:

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

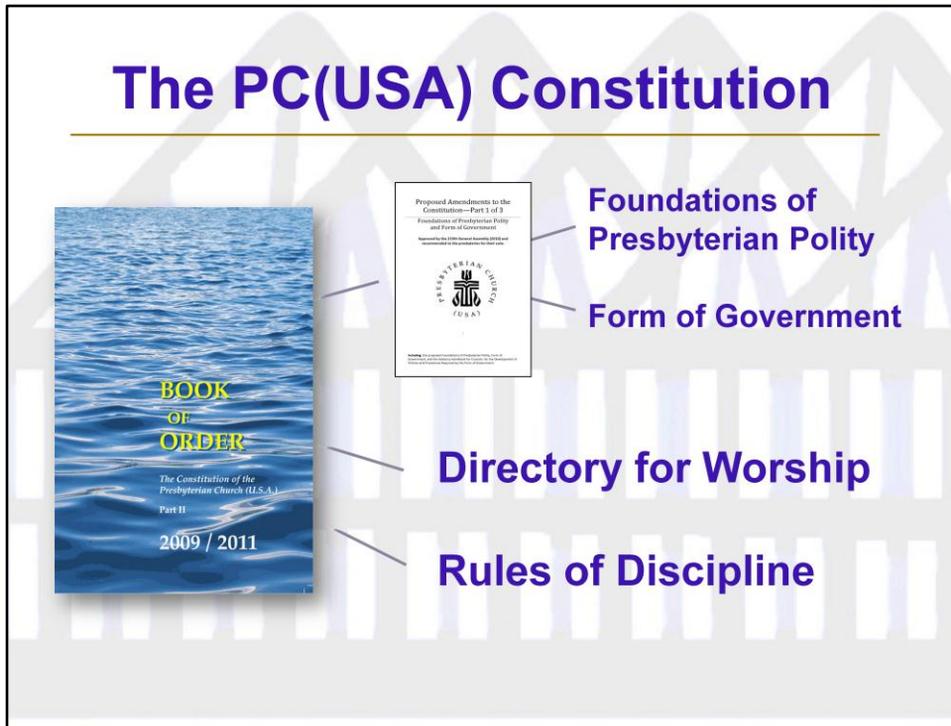
The Directory for Worship, which provides required and suggested aspects of our worship life,

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

The charge to the "New Fog" Task Force was:

- ✓ 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 (76 pages - and not reviewed here!)

# The PC(USA) Constitution



The proposal sent to the presbyteries by the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will revise only the **Form of Government** section of the **Book of Order** -- this proposal contains 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 (on 13 pages of text) - but rewritten into only three chapters on 11 pages of text,

And a new “**Form of Government**” containing some of the material from the 126 pages that hold Chapters 5-18 of the current Form of Government – rewritten into a proposed six chapters of about 35 pages of text. The rest of the content of the 2007-2009 BOO from these chapters either goes to Advisory Handbooks – which the middle governing bodies (or “Councils”) may localize to their specific situations and contexts – or simply disappears.

Again, Most of the content is re-written as it moves from the current BOO to the Foundations .. and to the New FOG.

## Part 1 of 3 Considering “New FOG”

### **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.]

This is what comes to you at our Spring Presbytery for vote.

(pause to absorb the slide)

Lets look in detail at how we are advised to prepare for voting on Part 1 ...

## Studying The Part 1 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 (i.e., “The Insert”) suggest that you study the New FOG (enhanced with my remarks) ...



**All Participants**  
*Engaging “The Foundations...”*

From the Part 1 Insert, item 2, page 5:

As you read the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** 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 Insert you are encouraged to really engage the material with these specific challenges -- first for the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity ...

(read slide)

## All Participants

### *Engaging “The Foundations...”*

As you read the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** 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

### *Engaging “The Foundations...”*

As you read the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** 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

### *Engaging* the proposed new FOG

From the Part 1 Insert, item 3, page 5-6:

As you read the proposed **Form of Government**, 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?

And then, proposal Insert encourages your examination of the New FOG with these specific challenges ...

(read slide)

Note the not-so-subtle shifts in the officer terminology from “deacons, elders, and ministers of the word and sacrament” (the current list) - to “deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders” (the proposed list) – and “officers” to “ordered ministries.”

## Commissioners

### *Engaging* The proposed new FOG

As you read the proposed **Form of Government**, 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 these ...

Read these sub-chapters very closely if you are, or have been, a member of either of these presbytery committees.

## Session and Commissioners

### *Engaging* The proposed new FOG

As you read the proposed **Form of Government**, 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 (that is you) with this ...

## All Participants

### *Engaging* The proposed new FOG

As you read the proposed **Form of Government**, consider:

**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?

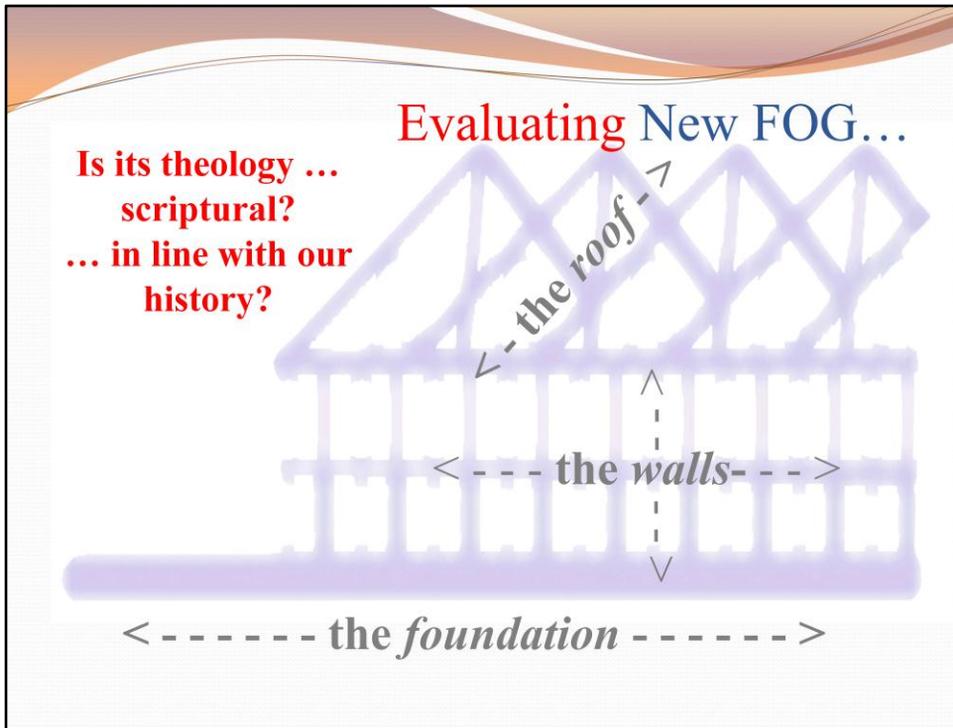
All involved in the study should consider ...

## 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 for considering the New FOG amendment to the *Book of Order* this way ...



Here are some considerations I think may help you evaluate this proposal ...

Recalling the New FOG Task Force's polity definition by analogy ...

(pause to contemplate the slide)

**Is its theology  
... scriptural?  
... in line with our history?**

## Evaluating New FOG...

**Is it practical?**



**If you walked into a “New FOG polity-blueprinted building”  
– could you find the dining room and know where to sit down  
for dinner?**

(pause to contemplate the slide)

**And ...**

**Is its theology**

... scriptural?

... in line with our history?

... **practical?**

## Evaluating New FOG...

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

- Adequately describe the *interrelationships*
- Unambiguously set out the *standards*
- Definitively outline the *functions*
- 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?**

Recalling what polity is ... as the Task Force defined it ... 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.

The Big Questions –

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

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

## Evaluating New FOG...

**EQUIPPING THE SAINTS'** key  
evaluation criteria...

Will changes make it better?

Is this biblical – or is it just  
political correctness?

Is God honored more with  
this?

Will the church benefit?

Is it all worth it?

Will it position the church for  
better doing of the mission?

Is this more important than  
what is in the bible on these  
subjects?

During the November **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS** workshop, the attendees added these evaluation criteria ...

- Will the changes make it better?
- **Is this biblical** – or is it just political correctness?
- Is God honored more with this?
- Will the church benefit?
- Is it all worth it?
- Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?
- Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?

## Evaluating New FOG...

### **HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

Will changes make it better?

**Is this biblical** – or is it just political correctness?

Is God honored more with this?

Will the church benefit?

Is it all worth it?

Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?

Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?

The **HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** also added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Will changes make it better?
- **Is this biblical** – or is it just political correctness?
- Is God honored more with this?
- Will the church benefit?
- Is it all worth it?
- Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?
- Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?

## Evaluating New FOG...

**BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?

The **BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?



The **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Is it practical?
- Does it honor God more fully?

## Evaluating New FOG...

**RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria ...

- Does it reflect **what the Bible says**?
- Is it practical?
- Does it honor God more fully?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Can we trust in faithful implementation?

The **RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Does it reflect **what the Bible says**?
- Is it practical?
- Does it honor God more fully?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Can we trust in faithful implementation?

## Evaluating New FOG...

**ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria ...

- Will this lead to a church that works?
- Is it **biblical**?
- Does it make it better?
- Will it divide the church?
- Will we be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Will this open the door to subjectivism?
- Is this make for a reproducible church?

The **ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Will this lead to a church that works?
- Is it **biblical**?
- Does it make it better?
- Will it divide the church?
- Will we be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Will this open the door to subjectivism?
- Is this make for a reproducible church?

## Evaluating New FOG...

**MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria ...

- Will this help us grow?
- Will this become more cumbersome?
- Will these changes help us explain to new members?
- Will this allow us to be flexible?
- How will this affect our members? / What's in it for me?
- Do the (older) members care?
- Will this help us get new members?

The **MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Will this help us grow?
- Will this become more cumbersome?
- Will these changes help us explain to new members?
- Will this allow us to be flexible?
- How will this affect our members? / What's in it for me?
- Do the (older) members care?
- Will this help us get new members?

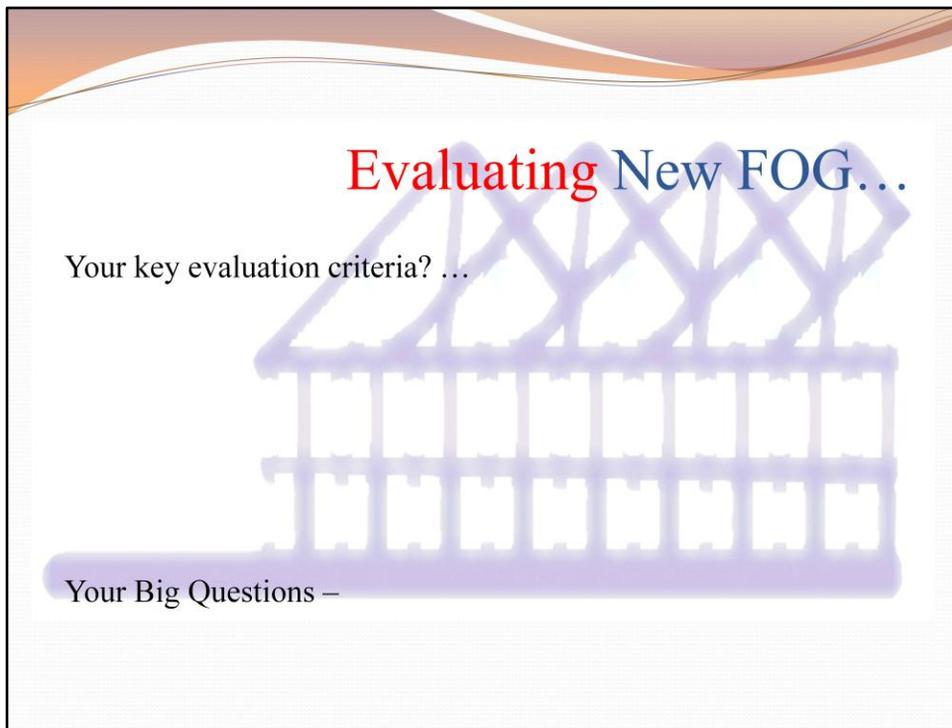
## Evaluating New FOG...

**HENDERSON PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Affirmed others' evaluation c

The **HENDERSON PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?



Now its your turn.

What additional evaluation criteria do you suggest?

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 ... (Yup – that’s Sharron!)

Absorb the slide.

Recall that at the denominational level .... *Book of Order* amendments require affirmative votes from 87 presbyteries to pass -- a simple majority of the presbyteries.

Well - unlike the *Book of Order* amendments,

- Approval of changes to the Book of Confession require affirmative votes from 116 presbyteries to pass this step at the denominational level -- a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries.
- But, at the Presbytery level, they again only require a simple majority of the attending and voting Presbyters to form the Presbytery’s vote.
- Once again, at either level, abstention effectively is a “no” vote.
- And if approved by two thirds of the presbyteries, the proposed Book of Confession amendments that are approved by two thirds of the presbyteries go to the next GA for its approval and enactment.

## Part 2 of 3

# Studying The Confession of Belhar

### **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:

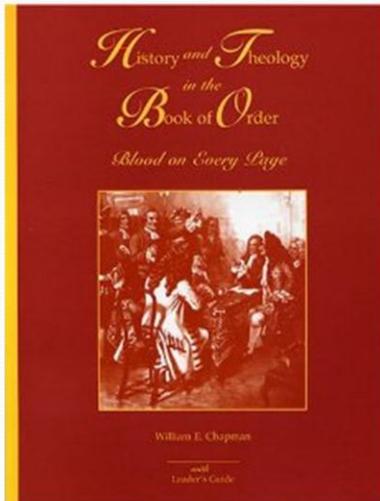
**Shall *The Book of Confessions* be amended** by adding the **Confession of Belhar** following **A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** and its accompanying documents? The “Accompanying Letter” and scriptural references to the confession should be printed with it without confessional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

This is how the question will come to you at our March Presbytery.

Note that three things are proposed to be added to the BOC – the Confession itself - and two explanatory and reference documents which describe the reasoning and add scriptural references to supplement the confession. The Confession would have confessional status and the others would not – they would simply be explanatory material.

Together, the material accompanying the Confession of Belhar (and the present Book of Confessions’ **CONFESSONAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH REPORT**, part I D, *The Functions of Confessions*, included in the BOC) instruct ... changing our Confession of Faith is not a casual undertaking.

## Threats to ... the integrity of witness



- 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*.

Those who have studied the confessions have observed that churches typically make confession out of necessity, not simply because they think it would be a fun thing to do. Indeed, one commentary on our Book of Confessions is sub-titled: *Blood on Every Page*.

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*.

The shape of confessions has been determined not only by the historical situation in which they were written but also by the uses for which they have been intended (or to which they have been put): ***Worship, Defense of orthodoxy, Instruction, Rallying-point in times of danger and persecution, and Church order and discipline.***

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.

Please understand that even though its treatment in this presentation is brief, it is a very 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. Here are the study recommendations of GA...

Absorb slide

The assembly committee report related to Confession of Belhar, and more background information from various entities may now be accessed as I noted above.

## 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 ...

Remember specifically, that 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?

## Evaluating Belhar...

**EQUIPPING THE SAINTS'** key  
evaluation criteria...

Will changes make it better?

Is this biblical – or is it just  
political correctness?

Is God honored more with  
this?

Will the church benefit?

Is it all worth it?

Will it position the church for  
better doing of the mission?

Is this more important than  
what is in the bible on these  
subjects?

What was the controversy -  
does it still exist?

These are what the **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS'** added or restated to these key evaluation criteria...

Interestingly, they were much the same as for the Part 1 proposal ... with this addition:

- What was the controversy - does it still exist?

## Evaluating Belhar...

**HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

Will changes make it better?

**Is this biblical – or is it just political correctness?**

Is God honored more with this?

Will the church benefit?

Is it all worth it?

Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?

Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?

**What was the controversy - does it still exist?**

These are what the **HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated for these key evaluation criteria

Interestingly, they were much the same as for the Part 1 proposal – with that additional concern also expressed in Equipping the Saints.

## Evaluating Belhar...

**BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?

The **BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** again added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?

## Evaluating Belhar...

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS' key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Is this a controversy of our church – or an urging of a politically correct culture?
- Is this relevant to the PCUSA?

The **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS'** also again added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Is this a controversy of our church – or an urging of a politically correct culture?

-- and this new one –

- Is this relevant to the PCUSA?

## Evaluating Belhar...

**RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says**?
- Does it honor God?
- Do the other confessions already speak to this issue?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
- Can we be led by this confession?

The **RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says**?
- Does it honor God?
- Do the other confessions already speak to this issue?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
- Can we be led by this confession?

## Evaluating Belhar...

ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS' key evaluation criteria...

- Is it **biblical**?
- Does it make it better?
- Will it divide the church?
- Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
- Will this lead to enforcement of hate speech law against the church?
- Can we be led by this confession?

The ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS' added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **biblical**?
- Does it make it better?
- Will it divide the church?
- Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
- Can we be led by this confession?

-- and this interesting one --

- Will this lead to enforcement of hate speech law against the church?

## Evaluating Belhar...

**MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Same as others' evaluation criteria

**MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Same as others' evaluation criteria, continued the concern for “biblical”

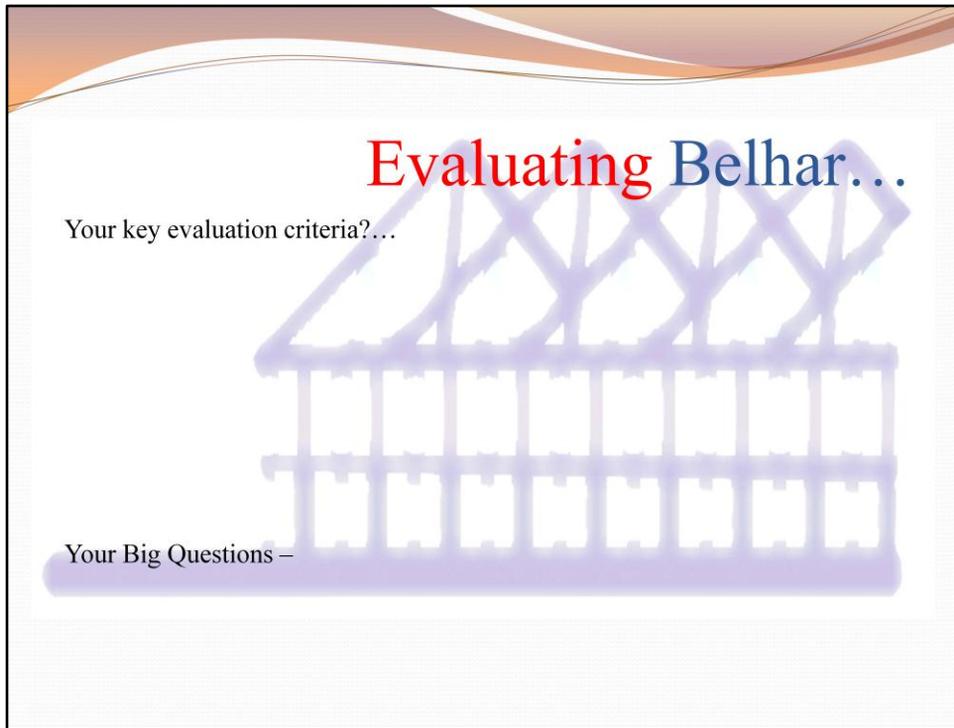
## Evaluating Belhar...

**HENDERSON PC PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Affirmed the others' evaluation criteria

**HENDERSON PC PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

Affirmed the others' evaluation criteria, continuing as well the concern for "biblical."



Again, it is now your turn ...

What can you add to the evaluation criteria?

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

Remember, these are where I suggest you begin your personal study.

## The BOO Content Amendments

Fifteen amendments to Book of Order:

- **Form of Government:** ten affected paragraphs:  
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:** three affected paragraphs:  
W-4.4003h, W-4.4004a(2), W-4.4006b(2)
- **Rules of Discipline:** nine affected paragraphs:  
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.

In these 15 amendments, 22 paragraphs of the current Book of Order are affected – across all three parts of the Book: the FOG, the DOW, and the ROD.

This is a very broad set of changes to the Constitution – far greater than any I have voted on to date (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).

Presbytery will consider each of these 15 proposals individually ...

Remember, again:

- At the denominational level ... each of these *Book of Order* amendments requires the affirmative votes of **87** presbyteries to pass -- a simple majority of the presbyteries.
- At the Presbytery level, they require a simple majority of the attending and voting Presbyters to form the Presbytery's vote.
- And again, abstention at either level is a “no” vote.
- And, if approved, they are effective one year from the last day of the referring GA's meeting (i.e., on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2011).

Yes, the red one is the hot one – it will be the whole story in the media.

## 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 for study in this format:
  - **The Question to be voted** [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.

Please remember: a separate vote is taken on each proposed amendment and, when voting, you don't know the outcome of any other vote – so study each one and be prepared to vote on it as though it was the only one being considered!

Each amendment is presented for study in this format:

**The Question to be voted** [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.

## 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 to the Parts 1 and 2 are made by here for studying the preparation material ...

If we consider these on the floor as GA recommends, the time shown is my estimate of what just these 15 amendments could take!

## 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 each of the proposals as you study them.

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS' evaluation criteria...

- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Is it ambiguous?
- What is “love?”

These are what the **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS'** added or restated in these evaluation criteria...

- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Is it ambiguous?
- What is “love?”

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

**HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** evaluation criteria...

- **Is it biblical?**
- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Is it ambiguous?

These are what the **HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated in these evaluation criteria ...

- **Is it biblical?**
- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Is it ambiguous?

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

**BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?
- Are these proposed expressions practically – and judicially – useful?

These are what the **BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** added or restated in these key evaluation criteria...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?
- Are these proposed expressions practically – and judicially – useful?

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS' key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it hold a hidden agenda?

These are what the **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it hold a hidden agenda?

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

**RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says** about this process/practice?
- Does it honor God?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Will this be used to enforce what it says?
- Will all be led consistently across the denomination by this?

**Do we trust each other?**

These are what the **RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says** about this process/practice?
- Does it honor God?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Will this be used to enforce what it says?
- Will all be led consistently across the denomination by this?

**Do we trust each other?**

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS' key evaluation criteria...

- Is it **biblical**?
- Does this change make it better?
- Is it practical? ... useful?
- Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Will this force us to be someone whom are not?

These are what the **ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Is it **biblical**?
- Does this change make it better?
- Is it practical? ... useful?
- Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Will this force us to be someone whom are not?

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

**MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Same as others' evaluation criteria

These are what the **MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Same as others' evaluation criteria, again emphasizing "biblical."

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

**HENDERSON PC PRESBYTERS'** key evaluation criteria...

- Affirmed the others' evaluation criteria

The **HENDERSON PC PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

Affirmed the others' evaluation criteria, also emphasizing "biblical."

## Evaluating BOO Amendments...

Your key evaluation criteria?...

- Your Big Questions –

And again, it is now your turn – what evaluation criteria would you add?

Now lets turn to the individual proposals ...

# 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)



Here is what Sharron saw at GA during consideration of this proposal. This is an historic hot-button issue and here was how the vote went at GA on referring it to the presbyteries ...

For those who don't have the current G-6.0106b memorized, we will see on the next slide.

## 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.

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

For this one, the controversy is not in the proposed substitute words – colored blue on the slide.

Rather it is in the emphasis contained in the words that are removed – even though these words may show up in other places in the *Book of Order* or Book of Confessions!

So, evaluate the effect of removing these words from this place in the Book of Order.

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

### **The Constitutional Questions:**

W-4.4003 – Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons. ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions:

a. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of

the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

b. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?

c. 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?

d. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

e. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

f. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

g. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?

h. Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

i. (1) (For elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service?

Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(2) (For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(3) (For minister of the Word and Sacrament) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(4) (For commissioned lay pastor) Will you be a faithful commissioned lay pastor, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(5) (For certified Christian educator) Will you be a faithful certified Christian educator, teaching faith and caring for people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

## 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 amendment is a clean-up item clarifying the removal process for the stated clerk to an appropriate place in the development of the description. Somehow, in our nearly 300 year history of writing, re-writing, and amending our Constitution - we forgot to include a process for such an eventuality!

Note the GA and committee vote.

G-9.0705 The process named is in the paragraph used for Termination of Synod and Presbytery Staff

... When the council, committee, or commission has decided to prepare a recommendation to terminate, it shall notify the person in writing, stating the reasons for proposing to terminate, and offering the staff member an opportunity to resign or to request a hearing before the recommendations are adopted and reported by the council, committee, or commission to the governing body for action. The hearing shall be one in which the staff person may appear personally with counsel (D-7.0301, D-11.0301) to respond to the findings of the committee or commission and present reasons and evidence why the relationship should not be terminated. The hearing shall afford safeguards as in cases of process, following the rules of evidence in the Rules of Discipline, Chapter XIV (D-14.0000). A record shall be made of the hearing, which shall become a part of the record filed under D-6.0304 in the event of a judicial complaint following the final action of the governing body.

## 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.**

Note the committee and GA vote.

Email me (Art@AGRitter.com) and I will send the Presbytery Policy to you, if you need a model for your church.

## 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.

We will see this ratio description amendment in other proposals.

When you deal with small numbers, you cannot achieve precise ratios.

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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.

This directs the Stated Clerk of Presbytery how to account for Christian Educators and CLPs – recognizing that those CEs who are also ordained as Elders may vote. We will see the parts of this “fix” again, too.

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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?

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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.

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

**Sharron noted (in her presentation to Presbytery):** GA formed a Commission that 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! But this is an organizational model issue – as we developed out of one of the papers on MGB Connect related to the Middle Governing Body Commission. You were encouraged to read the other papers at MGB Connect as part of your study for this amendment (and the New Fog, too). Though there was little argument on this, it could radically affect a presbytery’s or congregation’s expectations from Synod on a Synod-to-Synod basis.

## 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.

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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.

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!

This addresses that oversight. Evaluate whether it *fixes it* -- or not.

## 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, experienced Judicial Commission expert on this one!

Note the committee and GA vote – may not reveal the complexity of this issue.

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.

This is the rule of “silence is assent” found in Roberts Rules of Order – which would here be made explicit in our *Book of Order*.

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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.

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

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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 file charges. Is it enough of an increase? Please seek counsel of some who have had experience with this Rule of Discipline.

Note the committee and GA vote.

## 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.

Seek the view of one experienced on the prosecutor side of a church dispute related to behavior for this one to get the practical effect.

We will see this issue again on the next slide ...

Note the committee and GA vote.

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!

[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.]

Study this one as though no other item (specifically 10-N) would affect it.

Note the committee and GA vote – which may not reveal the complexity of this issue.

## So, how is it going so far?

1/6/2011, 8:01 AM <http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/votes.pdf>

### PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Approved By The 219th General Assembly (2010) Approval of Belhar requires 116 affirmative votes; all other amendments require 87 affirmative votes.

	Affirm.	Neg.	No Action	Have Voted	To Vote	Needed to Pass
Part 1 10-1 New Form of Government	8	2		10	163	79
Part 2 10-2 Confession of Belhar	14	6		20	153	102
Part 3 – Items of <u>Content</u> change						
10-A Gifts and Requirements, G-6.0106b	3	13		16	157	84
10-B Removing Stated Clerk or Clerk of Session	23	1		24	149	64
10-C Requiring Sexual Misconduct Policy	23	1		24	149	64
10-D Nominating Committees	22	2		24	149	65
10-E Presbytery Rolls and Registers	22	2		24	149	65
10-F Certified Christian Educators	22	2		24	149	65
10-G Synod Function	24	0		24	149	63
10-H Nominations Process	22	2		24	149	65
10-I Prayer Added to Ordination and Installation	22	1		23	150	65
10-J Stay of Enforcement	22	1		23	150	65
10-K Preliminary Questions	23	0		23	150	64
10-L Reviewing Work of Investigating Committee	23	0		23	150	64
10-M Time Limit	18	5		23	150	69
10-N Appeal of “Not Guilty” Verdict	17	6		23	150	70
10-O Decision of Permanent Judicial Commission	18	5		23	150	69

Here is how the vote is going as of the January 6<sup>th</sup> GA Stated Clerk report.

From this early voting we can note that not all presbyteries are dealing with all three Parts in the same meeting. We do not have that luxury – so we will vote them all in March.

Source: <http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/votes.pdf> - please revisit this page to get the latest voting totals.

You will see from this early voting – and subsequent GA reports - that good, mature Christians can read the same information and seek God’s guidance – and still come to different conclusions.

## Next Steps for Sessions and NV Presbytery:

- **Jan/Feb 2011** – Sessions, Commissioners, and Ministers introduced to the GA-referred proposals for study – study commences

This presentation will be updated with session workshop input as it progresses.

- **March 15-16, 2011** – **Spring Presbytery @ Green Valley PC** – vote on the proposals

And finally, here is the preparation roadmap for the Nevada Presbytery ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Elder Commissioners to Presbytery.

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

I am prepared to give this over the internet/phone for any of your fellow Presbyters who missed it today and would like to see it. Have them contact to me at: [Art@AGRitter.com](mailto:Art@AGRitter.com) or by phone 702 236 2637.

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

Go with His guidance and rest in His peace.