

ABOUT BEING PRESBYTERIAN



... a guide to
more effective
church
membership

What is a PRESBYTERIAN?



In the New Testament, **PRESBUTEROS** means "elder," and refers to the custom of choosing leaders and advisors from among the wisest members of the church.

PRESBYTERIANS are a group of **PROTESTANTS** whose church is founded on this concept of democratic rule under the Word of God.



The **PRESBYTERIAN** denomination is a form of Christianity democratically organized to embrace the faith **COMMON TO ALL CHRISTIANS.**



ALL THAT IS REQUIRED to be a **PRESBYTERIAN** is to:

- CONFESS** the Christian faith
- TRUST** in Christ as our forgiving savior
- PROMISE** to follow Christ and Christ's example for living
- COMMIT** oneself to attend church and to become involved in its work.

ANYONE WHO CAN BE A CHRISTIAN CAN BE A PRESBYTERIAN.



What is the
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
?

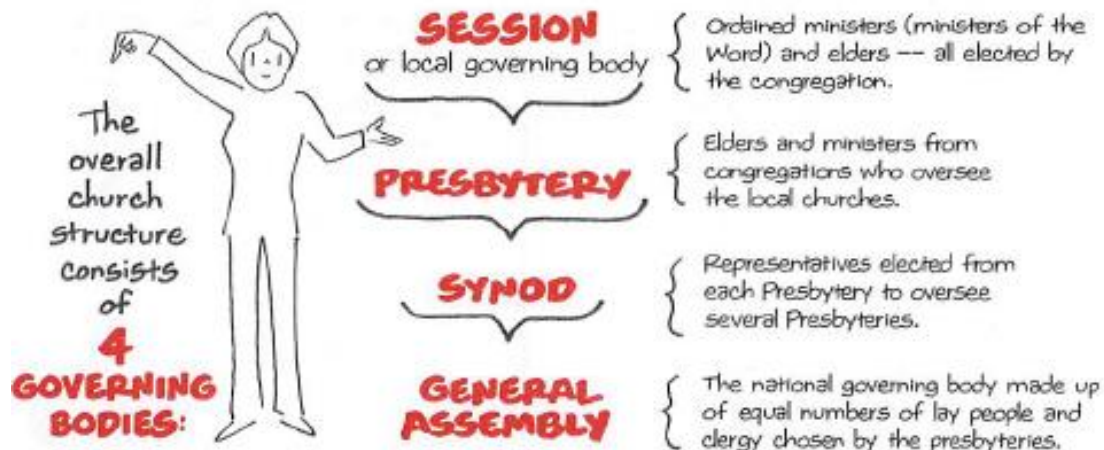
The Presbyterian church is a **REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY** governed by elders elected from and by the congregation.



Authority resides with the duly elected representatives of the congregation in the appointed church governing bodies. The local church governing body is the **SESSION**.



Local sessions oversee the day-to-day work of the church and supervise:
DEACONS -- elected to conduct the temporal and charitable ministry of the church.
TRUSTEES -- (in some churches) elected to manage financial, legal and property affairs of the church.



The
Presbyterian church
has a
rich and exciting
HISTORY.



1 **EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

The Presbyterian church, like all Christian churches, traces its roots back to the early church in Jerusalem. Modern Presbyterianism is considered by many to be a rebirth of the early church of the New Testament.



4 **JOHN KNOX**

The Scottish Protestant, John Knox, fled persecution in his homeland and studied with Calvin in Geneva. He returned in 1559 and established Presbyterianism in Scotland.



5 **WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY**

In England the "Westminster Assembly" of 151 Presbyterians worked steadily between 1643 and 1649 to write the doctrinal guides which Presbyterians now recognize as some of their basic texts.



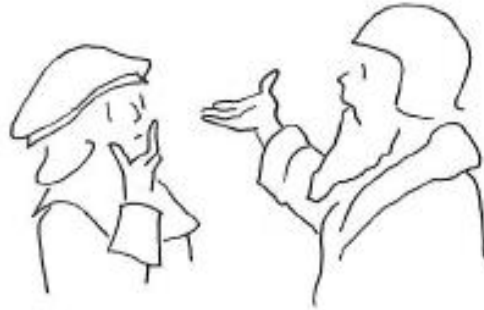
2 MARTIN LUTHER

The Protestant Reformation moved forward in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Luther fought against the pretensions of authority by the Pope and called for direct authority from God.



3 JOHN CALVIN

John Calvin, called the father of Presbyterianism, converted to Protestantism in 1533. He interpreted the Bible as the revelation of God, emphasizing theology, worship, education, thrift, ethical behavior and representative government for his followers. From his home city, Geneva, Calvin's ideas spread throughout Europe.



6 AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Presbyterians escaped persecution in Europe and settled in America. Presbyterianism was so prevalent in America that some British called the American Revolution the "Presbyterian Revolt." At least 14 signers of the Declaration of Independence were Presbyterians (including clergyman John Witherspoon).



7 PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE U.S.

The first presbytery in America was established in Philadelphia in 1706. During the 1800s, disagreement over slavery and Evangelism broke the church into northern and southern branches. The two branches reunited in 1983 to form the Presbyterian Church (USA).



What do Presbyterians BELIEVE ?

There is no strict set of beliefs which unites Presbyterians or separates them from other followers of Christ.



LIKE OTHER CHRISTIANS
Presbyterians believe in:

GOD
-- Creator of the universe.



CHRIST
--the incarnation of God on earth.



HOLY SPIRIT
--the presence of God in the world and in the believer.



THE CHURCH
--a universal company of Christ's followers.



FORGIVENESS OF SIN
--made possible by the crucifixion of Jesus.



LIFE EVERLASTING
--shown by the resurrection of Jesus.



BIBLE
--the inspired word of God.



For inspiration and guidance in their faith, Presbyterians have **TWO MAIN SOURCES...**



1 THE BIBLE

Presbyterians have always believed that the Bible is the most authoritative source for faith and practice for all people.



The BIBLE is an INSPIRED RECORD of the REVELATION of GOD to ALL.

OF THE AUTHORS OF THE BIBLE ...

Presbyterians do not believe that they were "pens of God" as the pre-Christian writers believed...

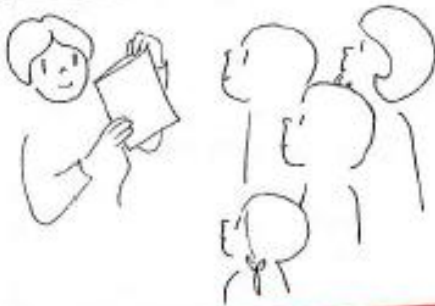


BUT RATHER ...

that they were "inspired" by God to reveal God to all people.

2 CREEDS and CONFESSIONS

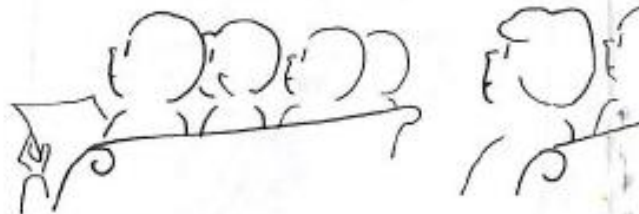
Creeds and Confessions are statements of doctrine which express the beliefs of a church or congregation.



These include:

- the Apostles' Creed
- the Nicene Creed
- the Scots Confession, 1560
- the Heidelberg Confession
- the Second Helvetic Confession
- the Westminster Confession
- the Larger Catechism
- the Shorter Catechism
- the Barmen Declaration
- the Confession of 1967
- and others.

SOME PRESBYTERIAN BELIEFS



1 THE TRINITY

God exists in the trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



2 CHRIST

Presbyterians believe that Christ is the Son of God, the Revealer of God, and the Savior of humanity.



5 VIRGIN BIRTH

Presbyterians believe that Jesus' birth was miraculous.



6 MARY

She is honored as the mother of Jesus, the special person chosen to bear the Son of God.



9 SALVATION

God grants the gift of grace, which enables us to gain the faith necessary for salvation.



10 THE CROSS

The empty cross symbolizes the risen Christ who opened the Kingdom of Heaven.



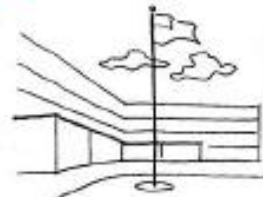
13 PARENTHOOD

There is nothing in the church's teaching which discourages intelligent, unselfish family planning.



14 EDUCATION

Education is stressed by Presbyterians, both for the ministry and for the laity.

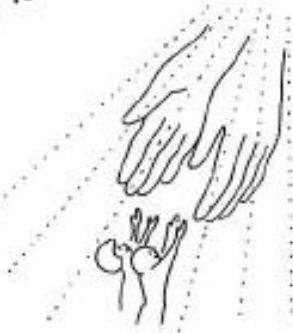


Presbyterians interpret the Bible very much like other Protestants do. Ultimately, however, every Presbyterian must find a personal set of beliefs through study, contemplation and worship.



3 HEAVEN

The souls of the faithful are reunited with God in a warm and loving relationship.



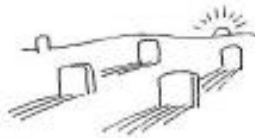
4 HELL

- separation from God which may exist now as well as in the Hereafter.



7 RESURRECTION

For Presbyterians, the resurrection of the body refers to the reuniting of the spiritual body and physical body.



8 CONFESSION

Confession is voluntary, and made directly to God, although it may be made in presence of pastor.



11 MARRIAGE

Presbyterians believe in the sacredness of marriage. They attempt to curb divorce by encouraging young people to seriously prepare for marriage.



12 CHANGE

Presbyterians believe that the Holy Spirit constantly heightens truth, and thus admit different understandings of the Confession of Faith.



15 THE "ONLY" CHURCH

Presbyterians believe that no Christian church has exclusive possession of the church government authorized by Christ.



16 THE SACRAMENTS



Presbyterians recognize **TWO SACRAMENTS**
-- as described in the **BIBLE**.

BAPTISM

This Sacrament unites us with Jesus Christ and makes us members of God's family, the Church.



For Presbyterians, Baptism:

- is an initiation into the church community, as ordered by Christ.
- is a public confession, not a private one -- it's a statement of faith made in the presence of others.
- does not guarantee access to heaven -- unbaptized people are not denied salvation.
- can be performed in another church -- there is no need to be rebaptized in a Presbyterian church.





COMMUNION

-- also called

**THE LORD'S SUPPER,
HOLY COMMUNION, OR
THE EUCHARIST** --

is a time to renew faith and strengthen participants for the duties and privileges of Christian service.



In Communion,
THE BREAD AND WINE
represent the sacrificial
body and blood of Christ and
recall the last meal
shared with the Apostles.
Together they symbolize the
New Covenant between God
and all people.



The creeds of
Presbyterianism emphasize
active participation
for all of its members in

MINISTRY and

Some are chosen to preside over
AFFAIRS of the CHURCH.

For example:

- ① Those who provide
**DIRECTION and
LEADERSHIP** for
the community of
worshippers.



- ② Those who perform the
different aspects of the
CHURCH'S FUNCTION
such as

- **PREACHING**
- **TEACHING**
- **CHARITY**
- **BUSINESS.**



**The ministry is the membership
of the church, not a special group
set apart from the rest.**



WORSHIP.

Presbyterians follow a **STATED** although not **STRICT** liturgy in their church services.

Formal church services, in keeping with the democratic foundation of the church, may vary from one congregation to another.

Thoughtful
**READING AND
INTERPRETATION
OF SCRIPTURE**
are the essentials
of worship.



The liturgy is designed to include the entire congregation in worship, just as the ministry potentially includes all members.



So--

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
is really
PEOPLE:

- the elders
- the ministers
- the deacons
- the trustees
- John Calvin
- John Knox
- John Witherspoon
- and **YOU!**



