



Town Hall Meeting

Sept. 12, 2011

Agenda:

- 6:30 Welcome, introductions, review schedule and purpose, opening prayer
- 6:35 Overview of governance, nFoG
- 6:45 History behind Amendment 10-A, Options under discussion
- 6:55 Charge to small groups – discussion questions and concerns
Break into small groups for discussion (*moderator & recorder*)
- 7:45 Re-convene in large group: Hear reports (*2-3 minutes per group*)
Notes from groups collected to be compiled and presented to Session
- 8:25 Closing remarks, closing prayer

<http://www.covenant.org/session>

PC(USA) - Key Dates in Presbyterian History / Governance

1517 - Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) / Protestant Reformation
/ list of 95 grievances, Wittenberg; challenged the authority of the pope of the Roman Catholic Church claim that freedom from God's punishment of sin could be purchased with \$\$\$\$.



~1527 - John Calvin (1509 – 1564)/
Geneva / presbyterian pattern of church government
“governing authority primarily in elected laypersons known as **elders**”
“presbyterian comes from the Greek word for elder”

1559 - John Knox (c. 1514 – 1572), Scotsman who studied with Calvin in Geneva, returned to Scotland



1983 - PC(USA) formed out of reunion between the *Presbyterian Church in the U.S.* (PCUS), the so-called “southern branch,” and the *United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (UPCUSA), the so-called “northern branch.”

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/>

What is unique about the Presbyterian church?

Presbyterians are distinctive in two major ways:

1) Reformed Theology –

That salvation is not earned by good deeds, but received only as a free gift of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ redeemer from sin.

The Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge

2) Form of government that stresses the active, representational leadership of both ministers and church members.

General Assembly - which represents the entire denomination.

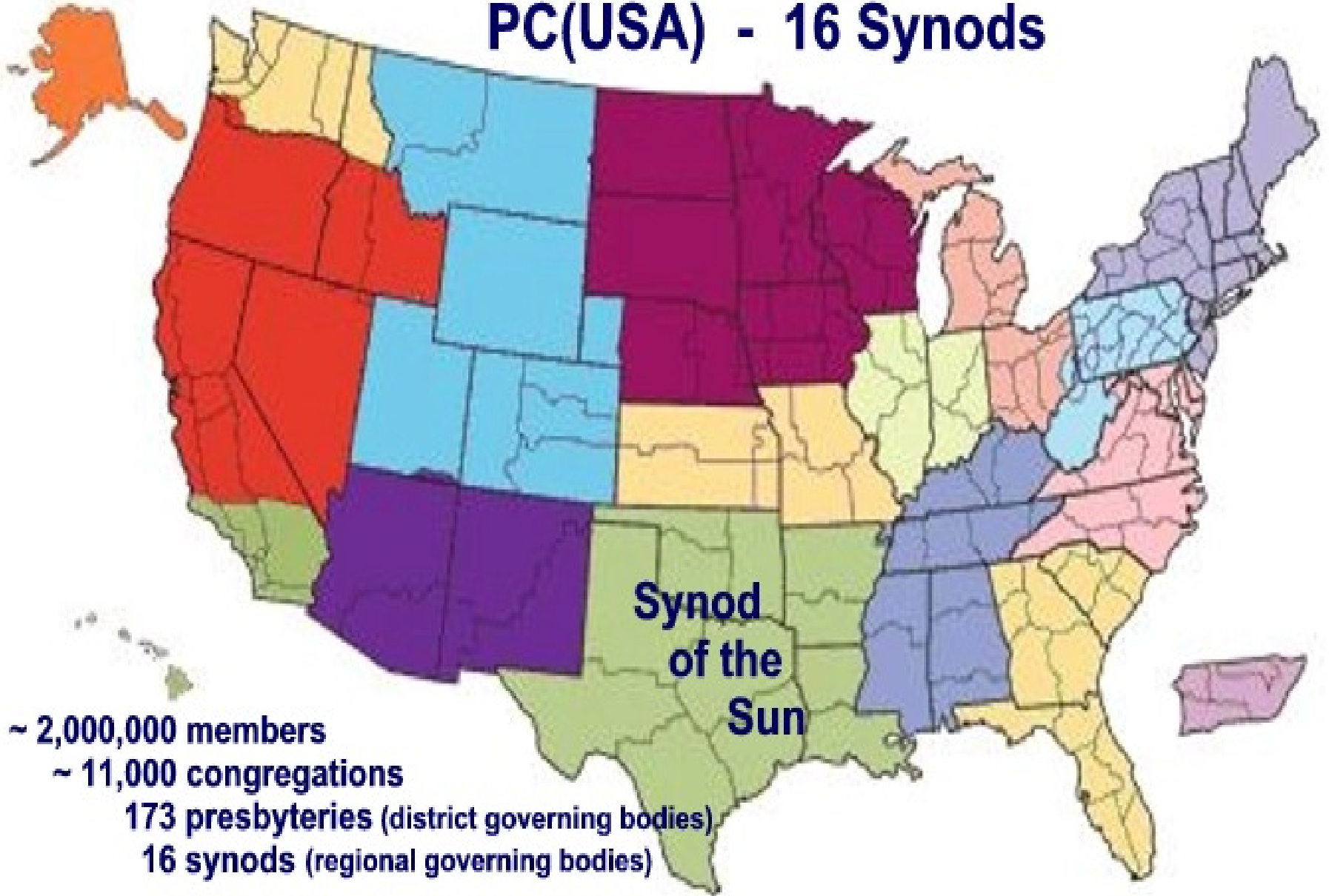
Synods (16) - which are composed of several presbyteries

Presbyteries (173) - which are composed of several churches

Session - the body of elders elected to govern a particular congregation, and the Ministers who serve the congregation. ***The session is the smallest, most local governing body*** (“council” for the congregation).

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/>

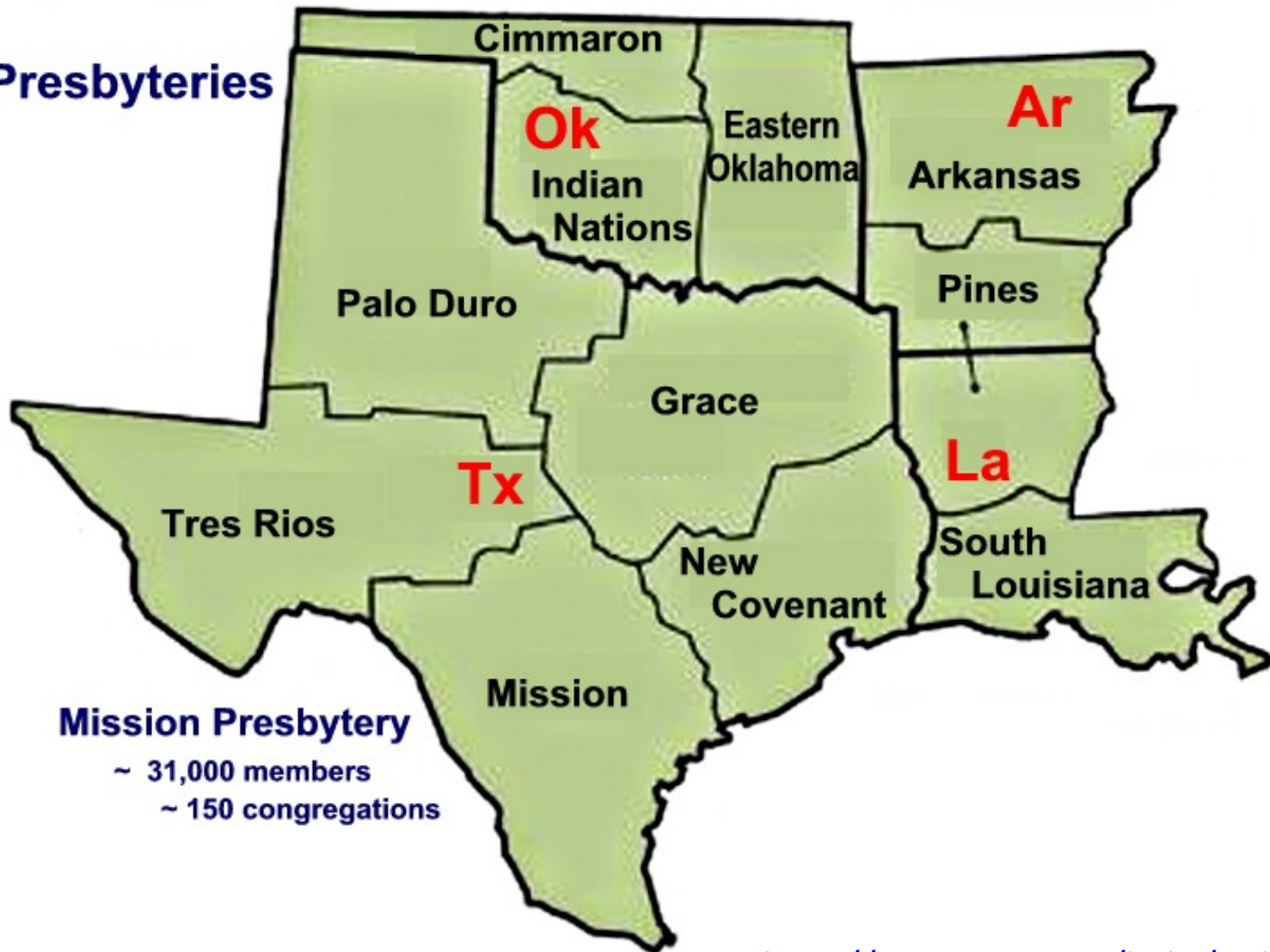
PC(USA) - 16 Synods



~ 2,000,000 members
~ 11,000 congregations
173 presbyteries (district governing bodies)
16 synods (regional governing bodies)

Synod of the Sun

Presbyteries



Mission Presbytery

~ 31,000 members
~ 150 congregations

The Constitution of the PC (USA)

Part I - *Book of Confessions*

The *Book of Confessions* contains the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed, the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Shorter Catechism, the Larger Catechism, the Theological Declaration of Barmen, the Confession of 1967, and A Brief Statement of Faith - Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Part II - The (old) *Book of Order*

Form of Government (18 Chapters: G-1 through G-18)

Chapter VI. The Church and Its Officers (G- 6.0000)

Amendment 10-A changes the wording in G-6.0106b

FoG has been amended over 300 times since reunion in 1983 (*overtures*)

nFoG - first full revision (shorter, fewer rules in constitution)

Directory for Worship (7 Chapters: W-1 through W-7)

Rules of Discipline (14 Chapters: D-1 through D-14)

nFoG – new Form of Government

(from “nFoG for Dummies” webinar by Dan Williams – Vice Mod Comm. FoG Rev)

Change in philosophy –

- *From prescriptive (regulatory) to permissive (freedom to act) polity*
- *About “What” vs. “How”*
- *Need for a clear mission statement (**let mission determine structures**)*
- *Shorter - formerly required structures in old FoG may still be important, but now they are not “constitutional” → **need to develop local bylaws.***

Top “10” Things to Do *(Sooner than Later – but be flexible, no timeline)*

- *Develop or amend “**Manual of Operations**” (G 3.0106)*
- *Develop **criteria for preparation and examination for those elected to ordered ministry***
- *Study sexual misconduct policy*
- *Flexibility in policy for members who have ceased “active” participation (G 1.0404)*
- *Flexibility in Rules for term of Clerk of Session (G 3.0104)*
- *Flexibility in Rules for term of Church Treasurer (G 3.0205)*
- *Flexibility in Rules for Nomination Process (G 2.0401)*
- *Flexibility in Rules for notice of special called meetings (must be reasonable)*
- *Flexibility in setting what constitutes a quorum for congregational meetings (G 1.0501)*
- ***Study the Foundations – let mission determine forms and structures (G 3.0201)***

Some History of this Debate*

(the origin of 6B)

- **1976 - UPCUSA** – "reaffirm our adherence to the moral law of God...that...the practice of homosexuality is sin..." GA also established a **task force to study** the matter further.
- **1978** – The **UPCUSA** formally welcomed gays and lesbians as members only; they are not eligible to be elevated to the level of elder, deacon or minister.
- **1983 – Merger of the Northern (UPCUSA) and Southern (PCUS) Presbyterian Churches - PC(USA)**
- **1985 – PC(USA)** declares all homosexual acts as inherently sinful, regardless of the nature of the relationship or degree of commitment.
- **1988 – Special Committee** on Human Sexuality formed by GA
- **1993** – GA reaffirms Definitive Guidance and calls for a **3-year study** and dialogue
- **1996-1997 – G.6 ordination standards proposed and approved by GA and the presbyteries** (*referred to as **Amendment 6B** and "**fidelity and chastity**"*)

Excerpted from "Elder/Pastor Orientation" - February 12, 2011

What preceded G-6.0106b? G-6.0106

From **1990-91** PC(USA) Book of Order

G-6.0106 Gifts and Requirements:

“To those called to exercise special functions in the Church – deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament – God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts for their various duties, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the Church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the Church.”

G-6.0107 Election by the People:

“The government of this Church is representative, and the right of God’s people to elect their officers is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any permanent office in a congregation or governing body of the Church except by election of that body.”

What changed with G-6.0106b?

From 1997-98 PC(USA) Book of Order

G-6.0106 Gifts and Requirements:

a. *“To those called to exercise special functions in the Church – deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament – God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts for their various duties, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the Church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the Church.”*

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.”*

History: Votes Since Adoption of 6B

- **1997-1998** — Amendment A to replace “fidelity and chastity” with “fidelity and integrity” proposed by GA but defeated by Presbyteries overwhelmingly
- **2001-2002** — Peace, Unity and Purity Task Force commissioned (didn’t report back till 2006); another amendment is proposed to delete “fidelity and chastity” but defeated at the presbytery level
- **2006-2007** — Final PUP Report which urges “Local Option”; proposed amendment to approve “Local Option” fails at the presbytery level
- **2008-2009** — Amendment to change the ordination standards is proposed by GA and defeated again by the presbyteries

1996-1997	1997-1998	2001-2002	2008-2009
Yes vote favors G-6b	No vote favors G-6b	No vote favors G-6b	No vote favors G-6b
94-74	57-114	46-127	78-95

- **2010-2011** — Amendment to change the ordination standards is proposed by GA, as of June 21, 2011, it was passed by the presbyteries: 97 – 71 (No vote favors G-6b)

What changed with Amendment 10-A (and nFoG)?

The 219th General Assembly (2010) proposed a change regarding ordination standards by a vote of 373-323-4. As of June 21, 2011, it was approved by 97 – 71.

From **2011-13 PC(USA) Book of Order**

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications:

a. *“To those called to exercise special functions in the Church – deacons, elders, and **teaching elders** – God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and **abilities**, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the Church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a **council** of the Church.”*

b. *“Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to **submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life** (F-1.02). The **council** responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall **examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry**. 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). **Councils** shall be **guided by Scripture and the confessions** in applying standards to individual candidates.”*

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR COVENANT TO CONSIDER

- Accept the language of 10-A, and implement the practice of determining whether individual candidates for ordination “*reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life.*”
- Maintain the previous ordination standards within Covenant as we see how reaction to 10-A develops within the PC(USA).
- Work with other groups to pursue options that would maintain the previous ordination standards. Various organizations, including the Fellowship and churches within Mission Presbytery, are pursuing such options. For example, remain in Mission Presbytery but request to become a “union” church with an existing or new reformed body. The congregation would be a member of both denominations. Individual Covenant members and our Denominational Affairs Committee are monitoring developments.
- Consider working within Mission Presbytery and PC(USA) to have 10-A overturned and previous ordination standards reinstated.
- Consider leaving PC(USA) to affiliate with a like-minded reformed group or to become an independent church.

“The Fellowship of Presbyterians”

<http://www.fellowship-pres.org/>

Fellowship Steering Committee:

Vic Pentz, Peachtree Presbyterian, Atlanta, GA
John Crosby, Christ Presbyterian, Edina, MN
David Peterson, Memorial Drive Presbyterian, Houston, TX
Jim Singleton, First Presbyterian, Colorado Springs, CO
David Swanson, First Presbyterian, Orlando, FL
Rich Kannwischer, St. Andrews, Newport Beach, CA
Mark Toone, Chapel Hill Presbyterian, Gig Harbor, WA
Tae-Hyung Ko, Good Shepherd Presbyterian, Rowland Heights, CA



The Start: January 7, 2011 White Paper – *“Time for Something New”*

Focus: May 4, 2011 letter - *“We are committed to starting a new Reformed body without leaving the PC(USA).”*

Name and Logo: August 16, 2011 – *“What is in a Name?”*

August Gathering: August 25-26, 2011 in Minneapolis, MN

“Nearly 2,000 Presbyterian pastors, elders, and lay leaders, representing more than 830 U.S. congregations.”

*“**New Reformed Body (NRB)** for churches who are tired of conflict of the PC(USA).”*

January Gathering: January 12-14 , 2012 in Orlando, FL

Discuss **NRB** options: membership, union membership (both NRB & PC(USA)), or affiliate membership.

Discussion Items:

- *What questions do you have about anything related to these issues (ordination standards in the PC(USA), the new Form of Government (nFoG), relationships with one another, our presbytery or the denomination, etc.)?*

- *What is most important to you regarding these issues?*

Refer to our website for more information: <http://www.covenant.org/session>

You can also email your questions or comments to: session@covenant.org