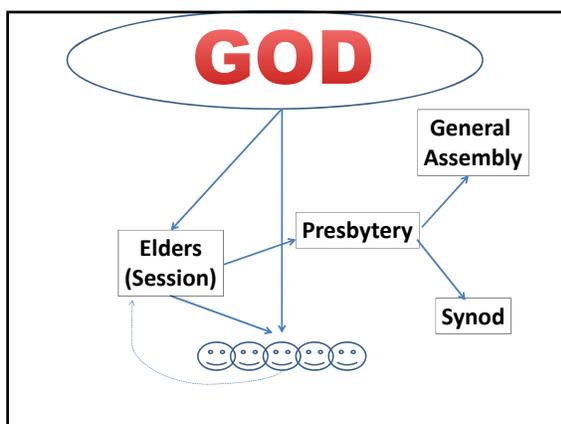


Foundations of Presbyterian Government- What Makes Us Uniquely Presbyterian

2014 Leadership Training Day
Presbytery of Detroit
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Ed Koster



Chapter Three - Principles of Order and
Government 1 (1788)
F-3.01 Historic Principles of Church
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F-3.02 Principles of
Presbyterian Government 6 (1797)

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms, within the context of its commitment to the Church universal, a special commitment to basic principles of Presbyterian polity:

F-3.0201 One Church

The particular congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wherever they are, taken collectively, constitute one church, called the church.

F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters

This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Teaching elders shall be committed in all their work to equipping the people of God for their ministry and witness.

F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. These councils are sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. All councils 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 councils are distinct, 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 council. The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller.

F-3.0204 Seek and Represent the Will of Christ

Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.

F-3.0205 Decision by Majority Vote

Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.

F-3.0206 Review and Control

A higher council shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint, or appeal.

F-3.0207 Ordination by Council

Presbyters (ruling elders and teaching elders) and deacons are ordained only by the authority of a council.

F-3.0208 Shared Power, Exercised Jointly

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in councils.

F-3.0209 General Authority of Councils

Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church. The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church³

Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever:

the Word of God is truly preached and heard,

the Sacraments are rightly administered, and

ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

In our own time, we affirm that, in the power of the Spirit, the Church is faithful to the mission of Christ as it:

Proclaims and hears the Word of God, responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and inviting all people to participate in that new creation;

Administers and receives the Sacraments, welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ, bearing witness to Christ's saving death and resurrection, anticipating the heavenly banquet that is to come, and committing itself in the present to solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and

Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ, living in the strength of God's promise and giving itself in service to God's mission.

Resources

Book of Order
Book of Confessions
Companion to the Constitution
All three can be purchased in soft cover or downloaded from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) web site <http://store.pcusa.org/>

Annotated Book of Order. On line at www.pcbiz.org. Can be ordered in hardcover or cd-rom from <http://store.pcusa.org/>

Ehkoster@aol.com
734-358-5403
