

Covenant
Presbyterian Church



Membership Form

For Office Use Only

Date Rcvd into Membership: _____

Roll Number: _____

By: _____ Reaffirmation of Faith

_____ Confirmation

_____ Certificate of Transfer

_____ Baptism (Adult)

_____ Certificate _____ Mailbox

_____ Name Tag

_____ Directory

_____ Mailchimp

Downtown Mission-Driven Inclusive

Name : _____
First Middle Last

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please sign me up for email notifications from Covenant Presbyterian Church: _____ Yes _____ No

DEMOGRAPHIC AND FAMILY INFORMATION

Covenant Presbyterian Church does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status. The data requested below is used for statistical purposes, monitoring our diversity, and in reporting to our governing bodies in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Marital Status: ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Widowed

Name of Spouse / Partner: _____ Anniversary: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Ethnic Origin: ☐ Black ☐ Caucasian ☐ Hispanic ☐ Asian / Pacific Islander ☐ Other

Disability / Special Needs: ☐ Wheelchair ☐ Hearing ☐ Sight ☐ Other _____

Dependent Child	Gender	Birthdate	Date Baptized

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Have you been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, Date: _____ Church: _____

Previous Church (*for Certificate of Transfer*) Name: _____

Address: _____

TIME AND TALENT SURVEY

What attracted you to CPC? What made you decide to stay and join?

In what ways can or does CPC serve you?

Please check any activities you are interested in:

ARTS

- ☐ Play an instrument
- ☐ Work with sound or lighting
- ☐ Work with multi media
- ☐ Make videos
- ☐ Woodworking
- ☐ Photography
- ☐ Maintain bulletin boards
- ☐ Arrange flowers
- ☐ Designing/graphic arts

HELPING OTHERS

- ☐ Make hospital visits
- ☐ Prepare or supply meals
- ☐ Write letters or notes
- ☐ Provide transportation
- ☐ Visit homebound members
- ☐ Participate in local Mission

I'M INTERESTED IN

- ☐ Book Club
- ☐ Women's Group
- ☐ Men's Group
- ☐ Youth Group
- ☐ Bible Study
- ☐ Small Group
- ☐ Food Pantry Ministry

FAMILY MINISTRY

- ☐ Teaching
 - ☐ Elementary
 - ☐ Youth
 - ☐ Adult
- ☐ Nursery assistance
- ☐ Food/snack prep
- ☐ Serve in Children's Ministry
- ☐ Serve in Youth Ministry
- ☐ Church-wide event planning

SERVE IN WORSHIP

- ☐ Greeting/Ushering
- ☐ Help with Children's Time
- ☐ Help to set up Holy Communion
- ☐ Welcome Desk

FACILITY CARE

- ☐ Gardening or landscaping
- ☐ Lawn maintenance
- ☐ Painting
- ☐ General repairs
- ☐ Flooring
- ☐ Room Set up
- ☐ Dry Wall
- ☐ Electrical
- ☐ Plumbing

How should we use your Time and Talent Survey data?

- ☐ I am eager to get involved ☐ On occasion I may be able to help ☐ I'm not available now

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The information provided in this application is intended for use only by Covenant Presbyterian Church for church purposes. CPC will occasionally take pictures of members at worship, in service, or in fellowship.

Signature

Date

Becoming a Member of Covenant Presbyterian Church

At Covenant, we believe that the Church (all believers in Jesus as their Lord and Savior) is the body of Christ. We believe that Jesus equips the Church with all of the gifts they need and that the Church strives to demonstrate these gifts in its life as a community in the world. (Ephesians 4:11-13, 1st Cor. 12:27-28) We believe that the Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life. The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation. The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down. And we believe that the Church is to be a community of witness, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God's transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord. (Book of Order F-1.0301)

How do I become a member?

A person may become a member of Covenant by one of the following methods:

Profession of Faith: A person who has never been a member of any Christian church, or who has been baptized but never officially joined a church, makes a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Certificate of Transfer: A person who is a member of some other Christian Church and wishes to unite with Covenant may request that we write for their letter and indicate your desire to transfer your membership to Covenant.

Reaffirmation of Faith: Some churches do not transfer members. A person who is a member of one of these churches and wishes to join Covenant will be asked to reaffirm their faith in Jesus Christ (presuming that they have been baptized). We believe that baptism is done in the name of Christ, not in the name of a denomination – we are baptized as Christians (not Presbyterians) and for that reason, we affirm the validity of your baptism, whatever Christian church you were baptized in. (1st Cor. 12:13) And for that reason, we never re-baptize anyone.

What if the Springfield area is where I spend only part of the year?

Affiliate Membership (perfect for winter visitors): A person who is a member of another Presbyterian church or other Christian denomination but who will only temporarily be in the Springfield area may use this category. An affiliate member is officially connected to Covenant Presbyterian Church while maintaining membership in their home church. Affiliate membership carries all of the privileges of active membership except the right to vote in congregational meetings and hold a church office.

Responsibilities of Membership as Outlined in the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order (G-1.0304)

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace, and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. This includes:

- Proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- Taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- Lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
- Studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- Supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of time, talents, and money,
- Demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- Responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- Living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- Working in the world for peace, justice, freedom and human fulfillment,
- Participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- Reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of your membership, and considering ways in which your participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

If you are interested in exploring membership with Covenant, please give Pastor Jody a call or send an email.

Office phone number: (937) 325-2427

Pastor Jody's email: Fire2Last@aol.com

Pastor Jody's cell: (419) 306-4591

About Being Presbyterian

WELCOME TO A CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

Welcome to this Presbyterian congregation! It is one of the nearly 13,000 similar congregations spread across the United States that, together, make up the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Early Presbyterianism in both Europe and America was often characterized by its insistence on a kind of "doctrinal purity" in which all congregations and all members adhered to identical beliefs and practices. Today, however, Presbyterianism is a uniquely diverse denomination in which it is difficult to characterize either a "typical" congregation or an average Presbyterian. Our congregations range from large metropolitan congregations of a few thousand members to small country churches of 20 members, from suburban middle-class congregations to inner-city store-front churches. Our worship styles and theological emphasis vary from congregation to congregation. We are ethnically and socially diverse and well distributed across the United States.

While this modern diversity sometimes gives us identity problems, it is also a great strength of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Whatever your needs and interests, there is a Presbyterian congregation for you. No matter what our surface differences may be, we are all members of God's family. We are brothers and sisters who love the same Creator and our differences genuinely allow us to be responsive to God's call. However, around the world, Presbyterians share a common understanding that we are all chosen by God to be disciples of Jesus Christ and this unifying force is much stronger than the things that make us different from one another.

As a means of further introduction to this congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the remainder of this document is divided into a question-answer format focused on the things we think you might like to know about the Christians who call themselves Presbyterians.

OUR HISTORY

How did the Presbyterian Church (USA) begin?

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is, uniquely, one of the newest and one of the oldest denominations in America. We are one of the newest because on June 10, 1983, the two largest Presbyterian groups in the United States reunited after 122 years of separation and became the Presbyterian Church (USA).

We are one of the oldest denominations because our roots go back to the very first settlers in America. Most historians affirm that nearly three-fourths of all America held theological beliefs common to Presbyterians at the time of the Revolutionary War.

Like most branches of Christianity in America, Presbyterians have suffered many divisions and celebrated nearly as many reunions over the years. However, no division has been as painful and lengthy as the division caused by the Civil War. At the "reunion" General Assembly in June, 1983, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (the "southern" church) and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (the "northern" church) became the third largest Protestant denomination in America and the largest Presbyterian denomination in the world. In a dramatic ceremony filled with emotional symbolism, the silver crosses of the two former moderators were fused into a new one for the single moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA). In much the same way, the people,

congregations, and structures of two long-separated denominations have been reunited into one Presbyterian Church (USA).

How did Presbyterianism begin?

Actually, the historical movement of which Presbyterianism is a part is more properly called the "Reformed" movement because it is one of the primary branches coming out of the Protestant Reformation. The movement is also called "Calvinism" by some because John Calvin articulated most of the key ideas of Presbyterianism in Geneva, Switzerland in the Sixteenth Century.

John Calvin

When John Calvin came into prominence as an important religious leader, the Protestant Reformation was already well established under the leadership of men like Martin Luther of Germany and Huldreich Zwingli of Switzerland. He was born in Noyon, France in 1509. A bright student, he entered the University of Paris and later studied law, theology, and classical literature at the Universities of Orleans and Bourges. By his early 20's, he was already established as a classical scholar and author of one book.

In 1533 or 1534, Calvin became a convert to Protestantism. He shared in the writing of an overly Protestant address delivered by the newly elected rector of the University of Paris and had to flee the city in fear of his life. At age 26, in hiding from the French Catholic authorities, Calvin wrote and published a small book entitled *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a systematic expression of his understanding of Protestant belief. Because of this book, Calvin suddenly became a major leader of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. The institutes were edited, enlarged, and republished several times in Calvin's lifetime and it was eventually translated into hundreds of languages as a primer of the Reformed movement.

Calvin eventually settled in the Protestant city of Geneva where he became the pastor of St. Peters. Although his career at Geneva had many ups and downs, he gradually became the established political leader as well as the spiritual leader of one of Europe's most important cities. Under Calvin's leadership and for generations after, Geneva was the acknowledged center of the Reformed movement. It became a haven for Protestant exiles from Catholic countries and the primary training center for Reformed clergy.

John Knox

Even though John Calvin's Geneva was the center of the reformed movement, American Presbyterians are actually linked to the movement through another John: the Scotsman John Knox. History first noticed Knox, a young priest-turned-Protestant, as the bodyguard for George Wishart, a leading Protestant scholar. In 1546, Wishart was arrested, convicted, and burned at the stake for heresy under orders from Cardinal David Beaton. In reaction to this, the growing body of Protestants in eastern

Scotland revolted, murdered Cardinal Beaton and barricaded themselves inside St. Andrew's Castle. Inside the castle, John Knox was chosen to be the spiritual leader of the rebellious Protestants. Soon, the Scottish Catholics aided by French soldiers battered their way into the castle and the Protestants—including Knox—became slaves on French galley ships.

After a year and a half of slavery, Knox was freed by English Protestants and he became one of the court preachers of Edward VI in England. After Edward's death, Knox joined the flow of Protestant exiles to Geneva where he studied under Calvin, further sharpened his commitment to the Reformed cause, and served as pastor to the English-speaking exiles.

John Knox returned to his beloved Scotland in 1559 when the nation was ripe for revolution. The Scottish Church had become decadent. Poverty and misery were everywhere. War after war had depleted the population. And, the government was a shaky coalition of feudal leaders under the French Queen Regent, Mary of Guise. After Knox preached his first sermon at Perth, riots broke out and revolution spread rapidly across the nation. Under Knox's leadership, the revolution was not only rapidly successful but also largely bloodless. By the summer of 1560, all foreign troops were gone, Mary of Guise was dead, power was in the hands of the Scottish parliament, and the Church of Scotland was reshaped along Presbyterian lines. Even though the Reformation was later challenged by Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, and endangered by both internal and external strife, Scotland has become thoroughly Presbyterian under the almost single-handed leadership of John Knox.

What impact has Presbyterianism had on America?

The earliest settlers in the American Colonies were primarily Reformed Protestant exiles from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the European Continent. Many of these were ardent Presbyterians. The largest group of Presbyterians was the Scotch-Irish immigrants from Northern Ireland who settled primarily in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Carolinas. The first Presbyterian churches were formed in America in the late Seventeenth Century, and the first Presbytery was formed about 1706 by Francis Makemie, the "Father of American Presbyterianism."

Makemie landed in Maryland in 1683 as a missionary from Northern Ireland. He immediately began traveling up and down the eastern seaboard establishing new Presbyterian churches, five of which are still in existence. He traveled to Great Britain and brought back new preachers and, around 1706, he formed a handful of Presbyterian clergy into our first U.S. Presbytery. This Presbytery is widely recognized as the first organized denomination in the United States and the beginning of American Presbyterianism.

Presbyterians were so much a part of the Revolutionary War that some English leaders called it "the Presbyterian Rebellion!" The Presbyterians' belief in democracy and freedom put them solidly on the side of the patriots and most historians agree that the Presbyterian understanding of church government strongly influenced the shaping of the Constitution of the United States. Indeed, the only clergyman who signed the Declaration of Independence was John Witherspoon, the Presbyterian president of Princeton.

In the southern colonies, the young Presbyterian clergyman, Samuel Davies, combined solid patriotism with evangelical fervor and preached the cause of independence as well as the love of Christ. Before he died at age 38, he had established several churches, influenced Patrick Henry, formed the first southern Presbytery, and served as a college president.

In 1789, shortly after the formation of the new United State of America, several American Presbyteries and Synods came together for the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. This is the point in time from which today's Presbyterian Church (USA) dates its existence as a national church.

OUR BELIEFS

How do Presbyterians decide on what they believe?

We believe that each person is called to work out his or her beliefs based on two primary sources of authority—first, the Scriptures and second, the historic creeds and confessions of the church.

The Scriptures

From the very earliest times, Presbyterians have affirmed that the Holy Bible is the most authoritative source for faith and practice and a source of the creative and redemptive power of God. We believe the Bible was written by persons who were inspired by God for the purpose of revealing God's love and truth. The Scriptures contain the remarkable and mysterious story of God's love for humankind and of God's divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Because of this, it is truly God's Word for Presbyterians.

Confessions and Creeds

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is a confessional church. This means that our basic beliefs are embodied in a series of creeds, doctrinal statements, and confessions produced by great councils of the church. In the process of writing confessional statements, Presbyterians have always affirmed that all declarations of belief must reflect the truths found in the Bible. Two of our creeds—the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed—are also affirmed by most other Christians. However, a few of our most important confessions are authoritative only for other Presbyterian bodies. A few of the most important confessions that we affirm are:

The Scots Confession was written by John Knox and five other Scottish Reformers immediately after the 1560 revolution in Scotland.

The Westminster Confession was written by a congress of Puritan clergymen of the Church of England that met periodically for nine years in the mid-seventeenth century. Even though it had little impact on England, the Westminster Confession has been the most influential of all creeds in Scotland and the United States.

The Confession of 1967 was written by a Special Committee of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA ("northern" Presbyterians), modified through a lengthy legislative process, and adopted by the General Assembly as one of the confessions of the church.

These confessions—along with a few others—make up the basic doctrinal heritage of the Presbyterian Church (USA). In addition, contemporary statements such as A Declaration of Faith (PCUS) of the former Presbyterian Church in the United States ("southern" Presbyterians) are widely used in worship and Christian education even though they have not been constitutionally adopted as confessions.

Presbyterians have always emphasized education and personal study and every member is encouraged to study the Scriptures, examine our confessions and creeds, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in identifying his or her own beliefs. American Presbyterians have historically emphasized the need for tolerance. While we believe in the truth of our own doctrines, we affirm persons and denominations with different beliefs as full members of Christ's Body.

What beliefs do Presbyterians share with most other Christians?

Actually, the majority of beliefs held by Christians are the same from one denomination to another. Presbyterian beliefs about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Grace, Justification by Faith, the Priesthood of All Believers, and a variety of other doctrines are very similar to those held by other Protestants.

God

The historic Westminster Confession states that, "There is but one only living true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit . . . immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute . . . most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin In the unity of the

Godhead, there be three persons: . . . God the Father, God the Son, and the God the Holy Ghost."

God is a reality that defies precise definition. To communicate God is to communicate the incommunicable, and the many writings about God ultimately list only attributes not definitions. In the final analysis, if we could define God, we would necessarily limit God and he would no longer be God. God can be the subject of academic reflection but can only be fully known through experiencing the fullness of God's mystery.

Jesus Christ

A God of total love and forgiveness is a difficult if not impossible concept for us to understand. Therefore, the great mystery we call God revealed himself to us in the form of a man, Jesus of Nazareth. Both the words and the actions of Jesus, as recorded in the Scriptures, help us to better understand the loving nature of God.

Even his ultimate act of obedience—giving up his life—is a means of illustrating the extent of God's desire to reconcile all persons to God. Finally, God raised Christ from the dead and the ultimate power of God was illustrated for all time. Jesus Christ is the Lord of all life, the redeemer of persons, and the head of the Church.

The Holy Spirit

God continues to reveal himself to us today in many different ways, most of which are identified through experience rather than knowledge. Both the experienced presence of God in our lives and the assumed activity of God in history are identified as the Holy Spirit. The absolute and constant guiding force of God in our lives is a mystery, which we identify as the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Grace

God loves every person and continually seeks to forgive our failure to be obedient. This constant love and forgiveness is given freely. There is nothing we can do either to deserve or to earn it. This activity of God—God's constant loving and forgiving of every person—is God's grace.

Justification by Faith

The sense of Chapter XI of the Westminster Confession is that "We are justified, or pardoned, not by good works but by faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This means that when we fully have faith that Christ's death opened the way to wholeness and love, we are justified, or pardoned, not by good works but by faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This means that when we fully have faith that Christ's death opened the way to wholeness and love, we are justified. Justification is being brought into a proper relationship with God and neighbor, fully understanding God's purpose for us, being freed from our obsession with self-interest, released from guilt for our inability to be obedient to God, and rescued from our anxiety about meaninglessness and death.

The Priesthood of all Believers

In the Presbyterian service of Holy Communion, the participants usually pass the bread and wine from person to person—a unique symbol of each person serving as a priest (servant) to each other person. We believe that each Christian has direct access to God through worship, prayer, personal confession, and the study of Scripture.

What beliefs are uniquely Presbyterian?

In virtually all of the doctrines held by Presbyterians, there are subtleties that set us apart. Most of these are minor and largely indistinguishable in the midst of modern diversity. However, two doctrines—the Sovereignty of God and Predestination—have been most often identified as unique contributions of Reformed theology to the whole of Christian belief. And, most of the other minor differences in Reformed belief flow out of these two concepts:

The Sovereignty of God

The focus of Presbyterian belief is certainly "God-centered." And, even though this could be said of virtually all Christians, the sovereignty, power, and mystery of God are emphasized much more by Presbyterians. For us, God is always one being who relates to us personally in three awe-inspiring ways: God the Creator, the unfathomable beginning of all things; God in Jesus Christ, the loving redeemer of persons; and God the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier who is active in the world and in persons. The focus of faith for a Presbyterian is the absolute trust that our totally loving God is the absolute ruler and protector of everything. The true purpose of every human being, then, is to love and trust God and to love and protect what God has created.

Predestination

Our emphasis on the power and majesty of God has led to the more controversial doctrine of Predestination—the belief that God in wisdom "predestines" some to heaven and some to hell. Three things have historically led Presbyterians to this conclusion. First many persons who come into a relationship with God genuinely sense that they have been "chosen" or "elected" by God because they did nothing whatsoever to merit or earn his love. Second, it is obvious that some persons come into a relationship with God very easily while others seem to be unable to hear God's call. And, finally, the New Testament affirms that God knows in advance who is going to turn to God and who is going to turn away. "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose. For those whom God foreknew were predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son...And those whom God predestined were called; and those God called God also justified; and those whom God justified God also glorified. (Romans 8:28-33)

The classic understanding of the doctrine of Predestination, even by well-meaning believers, sometimes led to arrogance and self-righteousness. Some scorned others while believing they were the chosen ones. Others emphasized God's action, while relieving themselves of any responsibility. If we understand predestination and free will as linked together, the emphasis is on God's activity of salvation to which all believers respond in faith. Our Savior...wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth" (I Timothy 2) Far from being exclusive and judgmental, we respond in humility to the power of God's love and grace.

Which sacraments do Presbyterians recognize?

We celebrate two Sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion, and we attach a significant degree of liturgical and mystical importance to them. However, we also experience God's grace in a variety of other activities such as confirmation, ordination, marriage, teaching, preaching, and social service.

How and when do Presbyterians Baptize?

In concert with the mainstream of Christians around the world, we baptize infants (as well as older youth and adults) and require their parents to take vows to raise their children so that the example of their lives will help lead their children to choose Jesus Christ. The parents and the congregation pledge to raise the children under the ministry and guidance of the Church until they accept the gift of salvation for themselves and become full and responsible Church members at confirmation.

Confirmation, which usually takes place in the early teen years, brings young people into active Church membership. The young people ratify the vows made by their parents at their baptism and are initiated into Church membership. The baptism, embraced in faith by their parents, is completed in faith by the children when they make their public professions of faith.

Most Presbyterian Baptisms are by "sprinkling" with the three-part blessing "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

How and when do Presbyterians celebrate Holy Communion?

Presbyterians use three terms interchangeably for the sacrament of Holy Communion: Communion, Lord's Supper, and Eucharist. The pattern varies all the way from quarterly Communion to weekly Communion in different congregations.

Although Presbyterians encourage variety in celebration of the Lord's Supper, the most common pattern is using a stated liturgy that reflects patterns and practices which have been followed with some consistency since the First Century. The liturgy of the bread and juice is to be done by an ordained minister standing behind a table rather than facing an altar. The elements—bread and grape juice—are inen disiriouted by the eiders UI toe congregatiüü anu üSi.ia1ty passeu 'FüiT person to person.

We do not believe Christ's body and blood are physically present in the elements of Holy Communion, but we do affirm that Christ is spiritually present and that the sacrament is one of the means by which his grace and love are available to persons of faith. Important to us is the belief that Christ's table is open to everyone who is willing to repent of their sins, to live in love and charity with their neighbors, and to follow the commandments of God. We do not restrict the Lord's Supper only to members or even only to Presbyterians. Everyone is invited to Christ's table.

Do Presbyterians take stands on specific social and justice issues?

The Presbyterian Church has a long history of concern for social justice and its members and courts have often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian principles. Early Presbyterians opposed slavery, liquor traffic, gambling, industrial exploitation, war, and the cruel treatment of prisoners. In addition to making pronouncements, Presbyterians have always involved themselves directly in caring for persons and in changing those forces and institutions in society that keep people from fulfilling their potential for full, free, and productive lives.

Today the Presbyterian Church (USA) takes affirmative stands on specific moral and social issues and encourages its members to study and to act on issues out of Christian conscience. Both of the recent confessional statements of the former denominations making up the Presbyterian Church (USA) have strong statements with regard to a Presbyterian's responsibility for the elimination of injustice, racism, oppression, war, violence, sexism, poverty, hatred, and the decline of basic moral values. "Christ teaches us to go beyond legal requirements in serving and helping our neighbor, to treat our neighbors' needs as our own, to care passionately for the others' good, to share what we have." (PCUS) " God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of human life: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate....It is the will of God that his purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from his creation." (UPCUSA)

Do Presbyterians cooperate with other Christians?

Presbyterians have always been leaders in Christian cooperative ventures and ecumenical organizations such as national cooperative evangelism activities, the National Council of Churches, the Consultation on Church Union, the American Bible Society, the World Council of Churches, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. In fact, it is common to find Presbyterians on the staffs of many nondenominational and inter-denominational organizations. In the last three decades, Presbyterians have been particularly active in supporting the kinds of ministries in which the mission of Christ is best served through inter-denominational efforts.

How do Presbyterians feel about education?

One of the historic traits of Presbyterians around the world has been their emphasis on education. Both Calvin and Knox were responsible for the development of extensive educational systems and the Presbyterians in the American Colonies were the leading pioneers in both higher education and public education. The Presbyterian Church (USA) maintains stringent education requirements for clergy and encourages church support of education at all levels. In addition, the Presbyterian Church (USA) is historically related to many colleges and universities across the nation.

OUR STRUCTURE

What does "Presbyterian" mean?

We are called Presbyterian because we adhere to a Presbyterian form of church government in which all authority is placed in the hands of assemblies made up of equal numbers of lay and clergy representations. In our regional and national assemblies, the elected representatives are called presbyters, from the Greek word *presbuteros*. *Presbuteros* is normally translated "elder" in the Bible. The elected members of the Session—which governs our local congregation—are called elders...

Three principles of the Reformed tradition which are important in our understanding of church government are that:

- church structure should be based on Scripture,
- everything should be done in an orderly manner and
- government should be in the hands of representative assemblies, not individuals.

How is the Presbyterian Church (USA) governed?

The denomination is organized in a system of governing bodies composed of presbyters, both elders and ministers. The Presbyterian Church (USA) maintains two offices that are mentioned in the New Testament—presbyters (elders and ministers of the word) and deacons—and these offices are open to both men and women.

The Session is the governing body of each local or "particular" church. The Session is moderated by the minister, who serves with elders elected by the congregation. The Session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.

The Presbytery is a corporate expression of the church consisting of all the churches and ministers of **the word in a geographic area. Presbyteries are considered the primary governing bodies of the**

Presbyterian Church (USA). They have the authority to install ministers in particular churches, ordain ministers, organize and dissolve congregations, and discipline both clergy and congregations. Most presbyteries hire some full-time staff for the ongoing work of the church in their geographic area.

The Synod is made up of an equal number of lay and clergy delegates from the presbyteries in a larger geographic area. Most synods have only limited authority but are organized to encourage and facilitate regional ministries.

The General Assembly is the national ruling body of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It meets every other year and is made up of an equal number of lay and clergy commissioners elected by the presbyteries. The General Assembly oversees the work of the many national agencies of the church, acts on "overtures" or petitions from presbyteries, establishes special task forces and commissions, and proposes constitutional and doctrinal changes which must be ratified by the presbyteries. It elects a new Moderator and Vice Moderator each year who serves as chairperson for the duration of the Assembly, and as an ambassador of the church throughout the subsequent two years. Every five years, the Assembly elects the Stated Clerk, the ongoing executive officer of the General Assembly responsible for administering its decisions between meetings.

Do you have missionaries and missions?

Everywhere in the world that Christian missionaries are needed and allowed, Presbyterians are there. Primary emphasis is on serving the needs of people in the under-developed nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America with food, education, medical care, agriculture, and spiritual aid. This twin emphasis on meeting both spiritual and physical needs has resulted in thousands of native churches, schools, hospitals, community centers, etc. around the world. Today, there are native Presbyterian denominations active in dozens of countries and missionary activities in many, many more.

In addition to the world mission, the Presbyterian Church (USA) is involved in thousands of missional activities, projects, and institutions in the United States including hospitals, nursing homes, colleges, universities, seminaries, high schools, primary schools, kindergartens, community centers, etc. The same creative diversity that is a primary strength of Presbyterian congregations is also true of our institutions. Diversity, excellence, and commitment to Christ's mission are the hallmarks of Presbyterian institutions from the smallest local churches to the largest hospitals and universities.

We hope this brief summary of the history, beliefs, and structure of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has been helpful. Again, Welcome!

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Volunteer Opportunities

[Covenant Presbyterian Church Choir/Bell Choir](#)

Anyone interested in joining the Choir or the Bell Choir may do so by calling the church office (937 -325-2427). Please leave a message and number for Eric Barga, our Director of Music, or talk with Eric on Sunday after the morning service.

[Christ Episcopal Food Pantry](#)

On the first and second Wednesdays of the month, help is needed to unload the truck from Second Harvest at the church. This requires some heavy lifting.

On the third Wednesday of the month, food is distributed to the people. Help is needed in bagging/boxing food items and getting food to their cars.

Call Kelly at Christ Episcopal Church (937-323-8651).

[Open Hands Food Pantry](#)

Located at the United Methodist Church on Jonny Lytle Ave. Free food baskets are offered on Tuesdays between 9:30 am - 12:00 pm and Thursdays 1:30 – 4:00 pm. You would help fill the food boxes.

If interested call Sharon Doyle (937-568-4691) or Gloria Sessler (937-325-7848)

[Rainbow Table](#)

Serves a free meal every Friday from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm. This is done at the St. John's Lutheran Church located at 27 N. Wittenberg Ave. Volunteer opportunities include arrive at 9:30 to help in food preparation, serving entrees, salads, desserts and beverages and assisting people to carry their trays. Also help is needed to clean-up after the meal.

If interested contact Gloria_Sessler (937-325-7848).

[Clark County Literacy Coalition](#)

Opportunity to be trained as a tutor serving adults and children Their goal is to increase the level of functional literacy among the people of Clark County and surrounding areas. Tutor Training and three leaning programs: Basic Literacy, English for speakers of other Languages and Teaching Children to read. Center is located at 137 East High Street.

If interested contact David Smiddy (937-323-8617).

Springfield Promise Neighborhood Christmas Store

The Christmas Store provides parents an opportunity to purchase toys for their children at a reduced price. The toys are donated by local churches. The store has a \$5.00 room (5 tickets), \$3.00 room (3 tickets), \$1.00 room (one ticket) and a 2 for \$1.00 (one ticket) room. Parents purchase tickets and give the number of tickets required per room.

The store is open the first weekend after Thanksgiving. Hours are 4 pm to 7 pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Saturday hours are 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Volunteers are needed to set rooms up, work in the rooms on designated days, and help serve the free evening meal provided on Saturday evening. Covenant provides the desserts.

Anyone interested in helping out may contact Leanne Wierenga (937 – 322-4289) or Cynthia Nowka (937-505-7253).

Sheltered, Inc. (Formerly known as Interfaith Hospitality Network)

Covenant has previously provided meals for the homeless, but they have shut down due to the pandemic. When they resume housing people at the Shelter, we will provide information about how we can serve again.

Presbyterian Seal

Have you ever wondered about the symbolism within the seal of the Presbyterian Church?

The seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a registered trademark, registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office on the principal register. In addition, the seal is registered with the United States Copyright Office.



The seal is comprised of the symbol, the basic components of which are the cross, Scripture, a descending dove at the upper part of the cross and flames on either side of the lower part of the cross, and the name of the denomination, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), encircles the symbol.



The Cross

The cross represents the incarnate love of God in Jesus Christ, and his passion and resurrection. Because of its association with Presbyterian history, the Celtic cross was chosen.



The Bible

The two center lines of the cross represent an open book... the role of Scripture as a means of knowing God's word.

The Dove

The uppermost section... the shape of a descending dove. A symbol of the Holy Spirit, ...also symbolizes Christ's baptism by John and the peace and wholeness which his death and resurrection bring to a broken world.

The Pulpit

Beneath the image of the book is the suggestion of a lectern or pulpit, which captures the important role of preaching in the history of Presbyterian worship.

The Flames

The flames convey a double meaning: a symbol of revelation in the Old Testament when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and the beginning of the Christian church when Christ manifested himself to his apostles at Pentecost and charged them to be messengers of the good news of God's love.

The Triangle

The triangle a traditional symbol of the Trinity also suggests the nature of Presbyterian government, with its concern for balance and order, dividing authority between clergy and elders and among different governing bodies.

The Fish

In the shape of the descending dove, one can discern the form of a fish, an early-Christian sign for Christ, recalling his ministry to those who hunger.

The Font/Chalice

In the lower central part of the image of the cross one can find a baptismal font or a communion chalice (cup) both images of the sacraments ... an ongoing sign and symbol of God's presence with us and working through us.