

FAQ Sheet

Frequently Asked Questionsabout Presbyterian Beliefs

Who is Jesus?

We believe Jesus is the Son of God, fully human, fully divine, the Savior of the world. We believe Jesus is central to our faith, our understanding of Christian discipleship, and to our salvation by the grace of God. We affirm that in Jesus “God did not simply show us a path to follow, but lived among us as the Way, the Truth, the Life.” (*Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ* adopted by PC(USA) 2002, p.9). In Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection we see God taking the initiative to love us and call us in faith. We boldly proclaim that “Jesus is the only Savior and Lord, and all people everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love in him.” We believe “No one is saved apart from God’s gracious redemption in Jesus Christ.” (*Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ*, p.11)

Is the Bible authoritative?

Yes! We believe the Bible, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, is the written record of God’s Word and tells of God’s relationship with believers throughout history. We believe the Scriptures are a “witness without parallel” and are to be “received and obeyed” (Confession of 1967, 9.27). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are to be the rule of faith and life for believers and are to be “read and proclaimed regularly” for the nurture, guidance, and edification of God’s people. At the time of ordination, leaders in the church are asked to affirm the Scriptures “to be by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal...” (*Book of Order* G-14.0207b). We believe that God’s Word is a source of joy to believers who seek to walk in the way of Jesus Christ.

What do we believe about the Trinity?

We believe in one God expressed in three persons: “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Scripture points to God as our Creator, Jesus Christ as the Living Word incarnate, and the Holy Spirit as the inspirer of faith within the believer’s heart and mind. In an age of confusion and relative truth, Presbyterians “emphasize both the necessity and sufficiency of the grace by which God is for and with the world in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (*quotes from Peace/Purity/Unity report*, 2006) God, in three persons, is to be given all glory, honor, and praise forever now and evermore!

Does the PC(USA) ordain practicing homosexual persons?

No. In recent years there has been much discussion in the church about this issue. The position of the PC(USA), however, has been and is clear. Ordained officers are “to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity with the historic confessional standards of the church.” They are to “live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or in chastity in singleness.” (*Book of Order* G-6.0106b) The most recent Permanent Judicial Commission decision in the Synod of the Trinity (2007) states, “We understand that no presbytery may grant an exception to any mandatory church wide behavioral ordination standard.” It further states, “The freedom of conscience granted in G-6.0108 allows candidates (for ordained ministry) to express disagreement with the wording or meaning of provisions of the constitution, but does not permit disobedience to those behavioral standards.” The position of the PC(USA) is clear.

Where does the PC(USA) stand on the ordination of women?

Since the 1950’s women have been ordained as elders, deacons, and pastors in the PC(USA). Presbyterians believe that God calls both “women and men to all ministries in the Church” (*Book of Confessions*, “A Brief Statement of Faith”). After careful study of scripture, taking into account the historical context of the Bible and allowing scripture to be an interpreter of scripture, Presbyterians believe that men and women, as called by God, are to offer the full measure of their gifts for the building up the Body of Christ, that is, the Church. (Ephesians 4:1-13)

Is there a pure and perfect church?

No. We believe the church is comprised of sinners who have been called by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be united in what the Apostle Paul calls the Body of Christ. Although the Church may struggle with issues, from age to age, revealing both its strengths and faults, as Presbyterians we believe;

- “The Church is called to be a sign in and for the world of the new reality which God has made available to people in Jesus Christ.”
- “The Church is the Body of Christ, both in its corporate life and in the lives of its individual members and is called to give shape and substance to this truth.”
- “The Church is called to tell the good news of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord...”
- “The Church is called to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of him as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples.”
- “The Church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life, trusting God alone as author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves to the new reality in Christ.” (*Book of Order* G-3.0200)

The Church, though visible and imperfect must struggle to be faithful in every age even as we await the return of our Lord and pray, “Come Lord Jesus, Come.”

Why is my local congregation so important?

We believe that since the Day of Pentecost when the Church was born (Acts 2), God has called believers into gathered communities to share Christ’s love and participate in God’s mission to the world. The New Testament gives testimony to God’s activity through these gathered communities to call people to faith and make a difference for God’s Kingdom. We believe that Christian discipleship is not a solitary endeavor. The role of congregations in calling believers to faith, nurturing and sending them into the world is crucial. We believe that together, with believers everywhere, we are the Body of Christ. (I Cor. 12: 12-31)

What is the mission of Pittsburgh Presbytery?

The mission of Pittsburgh Presbytery is to serve the congregations so they are healthy and vital as evidenced by: 1) success in bringing others to Christ 2) vibrant worship and 3) active participation in the mission of Christ’s church (Mission Statement). We seek to bring the whole of the Gospel to the 143 communities of the Pittsburgh area through the 152 churches and 4 new church developments. Every congregation is important. Each church is a vital part of bringing Christ’s love and justice to the Pittsburgh area and beyond. Our God is a missionary God and we are a missionary people. In response to God’s call, and working together as brothers and sisters in Christ, we share a desire to bear fruit for our Lord through evangelism, making disciples, participating in compassion ministries, and doing justice. **We seek to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord who said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 18-20)**