

The Presbyterian Churches

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History:

- The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. says, “**Presbuteros, the Greek word meaning ‘elder,’ is used 72 times in the New Testament.** It provided the name for the Presbyterian family of churches, which includes the Reformed churches of the world. Both Presbyterian and Reformed are synonymous with churches of the Calvinist tradition” (“Who We Are.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/who-are-we/>).
- The Handbook of Denominations reports, “Originating between 1534 and 1560 during the Protestant Reformation in France and Switzerland, the Presbyterian denomination is so named because it is a church governed by presbyters (from the Greek word *presbuteros*, meaning ‘elder’) who represent the local congregation. **The central theologian of the Presbyterians was the Protestant Reformer John Calvin (1509-64).** Calvin left his native France for Switzerland during the tumultuous years of the early Reformation. He helped to reorganize the religious, social, and political life of Geneva, making the Swiss city the capital of the Reformed movement throughout Europe.

Basic to Calvin’s thought is God’s sovereignty over the world and people’s lives, including people’s response to God’s authority and will, known through Word and Spirit. His system has been summarized in five main points: human impotence, unconditional predestination, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and final perseverance. God, according to Calvin, is the sovereign and the eternal ruler of the world; humans are completely dominated by and dependent upon God. More cerebral and verbal than emotional and aesthetic, Reformed theology places particular value on understanding, learning, and propriety. [...]

Strictly speaking, however, Calvin did not found Presbyterianism; he merely laid the foundations upon which it was constructed in Switzerland, Holland, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland” (Mead, Frank S and Hill, Samuel S. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States. 11th ed.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001. P.291).

- **According the Handbook of Denominations, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States numbering more than 3.5 million in 1999.** The handbook also reports that this denomination has progressed from the Westminster Confession (1647) and formed a new creed called “The Book of Confessions” in 1967 (Mead, P.304).
- The Handbook of Denominations reports of another body of Presbyterians in the “Presbyterian Church in America”, which is the second largest division of Presbyterians numbering 299,055 in 1999. The Handbook presents that, “**This denomination was formed in 1973 when delegates from 260 conservative congregations that had withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church, U.S. (PCUS) in protest over liberalism convened a general assembly.** These congregations opposed the PCUS’s ecumenical involvements in the National Council of Churches of Christ, the World Council of Churches, and the Consultation on Church Union; they also opposed the impending merger with the more liberal United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. [...]

The Westminster Confession of Faith is the Presbyterian Church in America’s primary doctrinal standard. The church teaches that the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the scriptures so that the writings are free of error of fact, doctrine, and judgment. Other doctrines emphasized are human depravity, salvation by grace, Christ’s death for the elect, and perseverance of the saints” (Mead, P.302-303).

God, Christ, and the Spirit (Creation):

- The Presbyterian “Brief Statement of Faith” says, “In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, **we trust in the**

one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve. We trust in Jesus Christ, Fully human, fully God” (“The Brief Statement of Faith.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/brief-statement-faith/>).

- Addressing evolution, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. states, “**Neither Scripture, our Confession of Faith, nor our Catechisms, teach the Creation of man by the direct and immediate acts of God so as to exclude the possibility of evolution as a scientific theory.**

Genesis 1 describes Creation as taking place in six days; however, it is not necessary to understand the Genesis account as a scientific description of Creation. Our Confession of Faith says: ‘It pleased God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, **in the space of six days**, and all very good.’”

(“Evolution Statement.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012.

<gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/theologyandworship/evolution/>).

Scriptures: *God:* Gen. 1:1-2, Psa. 110:1, Isa. 9:6, 48:16, 61:1, Mic. 5:2, Matt. 12:46-47, 13:55-56. 28:19, Luke 3:22, John 1:1, 14, Acts 7:55, 10:38, Rom. 8:9, 15:30, 2 Cor. 13:14, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:2, 3:18, 1 John 4:2; *Creation:* Gen. 1:26-27, Exo. 20:11, Matt. 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-8, **Luke 11:50-51**, Rom. 1:20.

Christ’s Words and the Scriptures:

- The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. states, “**Presbyterians have always had a very strong doctrine of Biblical authority, but historically most have shied away from calling that doctrine inerrancy**” (“Beliefs about the Bible.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/today/dont-believe/>).
- Also, PCUSA says of themselves, “**The church confesses the Scriptures to be the Word of God written, witnessing to God’s self-revelation. Where that Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the Living Word is present by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit**” (“The Word.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/word/>).
- The Presbyterian Church reveals, “For Presbyterians and others of the Reformed tradition the Bible is the means by which Christian believers come to understand how **God has been present with humanity since the beginning of time** and is present in our world today. By studying the scriptures we can begin to know of God’s faithfulness, constant love and eternal goodness” (“What is the Bible?” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/bible/>).
- “Since the 1950s, there have been many translations of the Bible into contemporary English. **Translations frequently used by Presbyterians in their worship services include the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).** Both are considered excellent translations that are faithful to the original texts insofar as scholars can determine” (“What is the Bible?” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/bible/>).
- Concerning **the Holy Spirit**, the Presbyterian Church believes that, “**Through the Holy Spirit, God empowers us to grow in faith, make more mature decisions and live more faithful lives. The Spirit gives us the will**, as Jesus said, to ‘be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matthew 5:48). **The Holy Spirit gives believers the authority to accurately interpret the Bible, just as the Spirit enabled the original writers of Scripture to tell truthfully about God, Jesus and everything else we need to know**” (“The Holy Spirit.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/holy-spirit/>).
- Concerning **other doctrinal standards**, the Handbook of Denominations states, “A delegation of Scots sat in the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643-48) with 121 English ministers, ten peers, and twenty members of the House of Commons to resolve the struggle over the compulsory use of

the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. **That assembly was a milestone in Presbyterian history because it produced a Larger and a Shorter Catechism; a directory for the public worship of God; a form of government; and the Westminster Confession of Faith, which became the doctrinal standard of Scottish, British, and American Presbyterianism**" (Mead, P.292).

Scriptures: Luke 1:1-3, **1 Cor.** 1:1-2, 10, **12:13**, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 3:3-5, Col. 4:16, 2 Thess. 2:15, 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18), **2 Pet. 1:16-21**, 3:15-16, 1 John 1:1-4.

Way of Salvation:

- The Presbyterian Church refers to its "Westminster Confession of Faith", which states, "**The 'Westminster Confession of Faith,' a historic Presbyterian document, refers to the Holy Spirit as a source of God's grace and 'the only efficient agent in the application of redemption.' For all humans, the confession says, the Spirit 'convicts them of sin, moves them to repentance and persuades and enables them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith.'** It further states that **God is willing to give the Spirit to all who ask**" ("The Holy Spirit." *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/holy-spirit/>).

- **Concerning baptism**, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states, "**Baptism, in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition, is a sign and seal of God's gift of salvation — of the saving work that has already been done for us in Jesus Christ...**

It is certainly possible for one to receive the gift of salvation from God without the accompanying rite of baptism. This is sometimes called 'baptism by the Spirit' — though of course the Holy Spirit is present and active in the ritual act of baptism as well!" ("Sacraments: Baptism." *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/faq-baptism/#how>).

- Yet, the Presbyterian Church states, "**Being washed with the water of Baptism, Christians received new life in Christ and presented their bodies to be living sacrifices to God**" ("The Sacraments." *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/sacraments/>).
- John Calvin stated, "For it is his will that all who have believed, be baptised for the remission of sins. **Hence those who have thought that baptism is nothing else than the badge and mark by which we profess our religion before men**, in the same way as soldiers attest their profession by bearing the insignia of their commander, **having not attended to what was the principal thing in baptism**; and this is, that we are to receive it in connection with the promise, '**He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved**' (Mark 16:16)" (Calvin, John. "Of Baptism." *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 4.15. <ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.vi.xvi.html>).
- "Those desiring the sacrament of baptism **for their children or for themselves shall make vows** that (a) profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, (b) renounce evil and affirm their reliance on God's grace, (c) declare their intention to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of the church, (d) declare their intention to provide for the Christian nurture of their child. The congregation **shall (e) profess its faith, using the Apostles' Creed, (f) voice its support of the baptized, (g) express its willingness to take responsibility for the nurture of those baptized. An elder may lead the congregation in these professions and affirmations.**

The minister of Word and Sacrament offers a **baptismal prayer**. This prayer (a) expresses thanksgiving for God's covenant faithfulness, (b) gives praise for God's reconciling acts, (c) asks that the Holy Spirit, attend and empower the baptism, make the water a water of redemption and rebirth, and equip the church for faithfulness.

The water used for baptism should be common to the location, and shall be applied to the person by pouring, sprinkling, or immersion. By whatever mode, the water should be applied visibly and generously. The minister shall use the name given the person to be baptized and shall baptize in the name of the triune God. The baptismal formula is: '_____, I baptize you in the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (“Sacraments: Baptism.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/faq-baptism/#how>).

- **“Most importantly, the baptismal font belongs in the sanctuary, or wherever the people of God regularly assemble for worship.** The presence of the font in worship should serve as a constant reminder of the new life that is ours in Christ Jesus, through our dying and rising with Christ in baptism, the forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, our incorporation into Christ’s body and the promise of life eternal and abundant in the kingdom of God. The font should be in full view of the congregation and open and filled with water on every Lord’s Day, so that all may see and sense the depth of meaning associated with Christian baptism” (“Sacraments: Baptism.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/faq-baptism/#how>).
- Yet, the Presbyterian Church also states, “The ‘Brief Statement of Faith,’ the most recent Presbyterian confessional document also speaks about the Holy Spirit: [...]

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church” (“The Holy Spirit.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/holy-spirit/>).

- Concerning **predestination**, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. presents, “Predestination is a teaching to which some Christians have adhered, including the Reformed theologian John Calvin. While the doctrine of predestination has sometimes been hotly disputed, it belongs within the larger context of John Calvin’s teachings about God’s grace.

Calvin argued from Scripture that God has ‘predestined’ or ‘elected’ some people to be saved in Jesus Christ and others not to be. He insisted, nonetheless, that we could be sure only of our own salvation; we were never in a position to judge whether or not another person was saved” (“Predestination.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/predestination/>).

- Further about **predestination**, the PCUSA states, “**Calvin defines predestination as ‘God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each [person]. For ... eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others.’** So predestination is an act of God’s will through which God elects or chooses those whom God calls to faith and thus to eternal life, and through which God chooses those who will not receive faith” (“What Do Presbyterians Believe about Predestination?” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/today/predestination/>).

Scriptures: Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, **John 6:53-56, 16:7-13**, Acts 2:28, 3:19, 8:38, 22:16, Rom. 6:3-7, Col. 2:11-12, **1 Tim. 2:4**, 1 Pet. 3:21, **2 Pet. 1:10, 3:9**, 1 John 1:5-2:6.

Church Government:

- The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. reports of their government, “**The body of elders elected to govern a particular congregation is called a session.** They are elected by the congregation and in one sense are representatives of the other members of the congregation. [...] **Ministers who serve the congregation are also part of the session.** The session is the smallest, most local governing body. **The other governing bodies are presbyteries, which are composed of several churches, synods, which are composed of several presbyteries, and the General Assembly, which represents the entire denomination. Elders and ministers who serve on these governing bodies are also called presbyters**” (“What is Unique about the Presbyterian Church?” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/unique/>).

- The Handbook of Denominations notes the specific government of Presbyterians, “Presbyterian churches typically exhibit a basic organizational structure. **Each congregation has a local session made up of elders**, with the pastor as moderator. **The session governs the local church, receiving and disciplining members as well as acting for the church’s welfare. Presbyteries, made up of congregations in a local district, examine, ordain, and install ministers; review reports from sessions; and hear any complaints. The synods, occupying larger boundaries, review the presbytery records, organize new presbyteries, and help to administer denominational matters.**

The highest judicial body is a general assembly, which meets yearly and is made up of lay and clergy delegates elected by their presbyteries on a proportional plan of representation. The general assembly settles all matters of policy and doctrine referred to it by the lower governing bodies, establishes new synods, appoints agencies and commissions, and reviews appeals. There are two key officers of the general assembly: a chief (principal, stated) clerk, who is essentially the chief executive officer of the church; and a moderator, who presides over the assembly and often speaks for the church during the year” (Mead, P.296).

- Regarding **women being presbyters**, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. says, “**Although women were first ordained as elders in one of the predecessor denominations to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1930, it was not until 1956 that presbyteries were permitted to ordain women to the ministry.**

In a different predecessor denomination, the 1956 General Assembly approved changes in the church’s constitution to allow the election of women as deacons and ruling elders. Those changes were defeated by the presbyteries, but the 1957 General Assembly responded to the defeat by urging that women be included in all church committees including those on finances and budget. **The first ordination of women as elders in this denomination actually occurred in 1962. As ministers, women were ordained beginning 1965** (“Women in the Church.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/women/>).

Scriptures: Acts 14:26, 20:28, Eph. 1:22, 4:11-12, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:18, 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

Worship and Assembly:

- The Presbyterian Church asserts that, “**The Word is also proclaimed through song in anthems and solos based on scriptural texts**, in cantatas and oratorios which tell the biblical story, in psalms and canticles, and in hymns, spirituals, and spiritual songs which present the truth of the biblical faith. Song in worship may also express the response of the people to the Word read, sung, enacted, or proclaimed. **Drama and dance, poetry and pageant, indeed, most other human art forms are also expressions through which the people of God have proclaimed and responded to the Word.** Those entrusted with the proclamation of the Word through art forms should exercise care that the gospel is faithfully presented in ways through which the people of God may receive and respond” (“Music and Art.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/music-and-art/>).
- Regarding **the Lord’s Supper**, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) says, “Furthermore, **the sacrament that Christ instituted for the remembrance of him takes the form of a simple meal — a sharing of bread and wine.** Therefore, it is Presbyterian practice to refer to the Lord’s table rather than an altar...

The bread and the cup may be served by ordained officers of the church, or by other church members on invitation of the session or authorizing governing body. The serving of the elements may be extended, by two or more ordained officers of the church,...

While the bread and the cup are being shared, the people may sing psalms, hymns, spirituals or other appropriate songs; the choir may sing anthems or other appropriate musical offerings; instrumental music suitable to the occasion may be played; appropriate passages of Scripture may be read; or people may pray in silence.

Similarly, the *Directory for Worship* describes the Eucharistic Prayer as follows: ‘The one presiding is to lead the people in the prayer, (a) thanking God for creation and providence, for covenant history, and for seasonal blessings, with an acclamation of praise; (b) remembering God's acts of salvation in Jesus Christ: his birth, life, death, resurrection, and promise of coming, and institution of the Supper (if not otherwise spoken), together with an acclamation of faith; (c) **calling upon the Holy Spirit to draw the people into the presence of the risen Christ** so that they (1) may be fed, (2) may be joined in the communion of saints to all God's people and to the risen Christ, and (3) may be sent to serve as faithful disciples; followed by **an ascription of praise to the triune God**, and (d) **the Lord's Prayer**.

The bread should be whole, unbroken at the start of the eucharistic prayer. The wholeness of the bread is a sign of the unity of the church, and the wholeness (or ‘shalom’) that is ours in the body of Christ. As Paul wrote, ‘Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread’ (1 Corinthians 10:17)...

By the same token, if a congregation (by decision of the session) elects to use wine instead of grape juice, non-alcoholic wine should be used so that those who do not drink alcohol (including children) may participate freely and equally...

The 2006 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sacrament study *Invitation to Christ* makes this recommendation: ‘**Set cup and plate on the Lord's Table on every Lord's Day.**’ **The paten and chalice help us to remember the primary function of the Lord's Table, and can serve to whet our appetite for the spiritual nourishment we receive from Christ in the Lord's Supper — even on Sundays when the sacrament is not celebrated.** Elaborating on this point, the authors of *Invitation to Christ* advise: ‘Be sensitive to what the presence of other things on the Lord's Table says about the meaning of the meal’ (“Sacraments: Lord's Supper.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/faq-lordssupper/#table>).

- The Presbyterian Church also notes, **“The Lord's Day was characterized by recollecting Jesus' words and deeds, and celebrating the presence of the risen Christ among them in the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper. A story and a meal formed the heart of worship each Sunday.** Sunday was and is a festival in its own right” (“The Service for the Lord's Day.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/service-lords-day/>).
- **Concerning church music**, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. states, **“In addition to psalms the Church in the New Testament sang hymns and spiritual songs.** Through the ages and from varied cultures, the church has developed additional musical forms for congregational prayer. Congregations are encouraged to use these diverse musical forms for prayer as well as those which arise out of the musical life of their own cultures.

To lead the congregation in the singing of prayer is a primary role of the choir and other musicians. They also may pray on behalf of the congregation with introits, responses, and other musical forms. Instrumental music may be a form of prayer since words are not essential to prayer. In worship, music is not to be for entertainment or artistic display” (“Music and Art.” *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/worship/music-and-art/>).

- As Presbyterians are Calvinists following his interpretation, **John Calvin wrote about musical instruments**, “For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to dissever their cheerfulness from the praises of God. **But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God**

would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. **Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints only in a known tongue, (1 Corinthians 14:16.) The voice of man, although not understood by the generality, assuredly excels all inanimate instruments of music; and yet we see what St Paul determines concerning speaking in an unknown tongue**" (Calvin, John. "Psalm 33.2." *Commentary on Psalms*. <ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08.xxxix.i.html>).

Scriptures: Matt. 6:1-18, 15:1-9, 23, John 4:21-24; **1 Cor.** 4:17, 11:17-34; **14**, 16:1-3; Eph. 5:19; Col. 2:18-23, 3:16; Heb. 2:12, 10:24-25, 13:15-16.

Morality:

- Addressing **abortion**, the Presbyterian Church says, "**Presbyterians have struggled with the issue of abortion for more than 30 years**, beginning in 1970 when the General Assembly, **the national governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), declared that 'the artificial or induced termination of a pregnancy is a matter of careful ethical decision of the patient ... and therefore should not be restricted by law ...'** In the years that followed this action, the General Assembly has adopted policy and taken positions on the subject of abortion. [...]

The strong Christian presumption is that since all life is precious to God, we are to preserve and protect it. Abortion ought to be an option of last resort.

The Christian community must be concerned about and address the circumstances that bring a woman to consider abortion as the best available option. Poverty, unjust societal realities, sexism, racism, and inadequate supportive relationships may render a woman virtually powerless to choose freely" ("Abortion Issues." *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/abortion-issues/>).

- Concerning **homosexuality**, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. states, "**By neither endorsing same-sex practice nor reaffirming the original convictions of the General Assembly in 1978, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) finds itself without consensus on homosexuality. Yet, actions of the General Assembly have led to conversations of discernment on congregational and presbytery levels, especially regarding the ordination of persons in same-gender relationships**" ("Homosexuality." *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 27 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/homosexuality/>).
- Concerning **capital punishment**, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. decided, "**In 1959 the 171st General Assembly, 'believing that capital punishment cannot be condoned by an interpretation of the Bible based upon the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ,' called on Christians to 'seek the redemption of evil doers and not their death' and noted that 'the use of the death penalty tends to brutalize the society that condones it.'** [...]

In 1985, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), reaffirmed these positions and declared 'its continuing opposition to capital punishment'" ("Capital Punishment." *The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/capital-punishment/>).

Scriptures: Matt. 15:19, Mark 7:20-23, **Rom. 1:24-32**, 12:9-15:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:16-6:10, Eph. 4:17-6:18, Col. 3-4:6.

Marriage and Divorce:

- In their Book of Order, **the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states, "Christian marriage is an institution ordained of God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, established and sanctified for the happiness and welfare of mankind, into which spiritual and physical union one man and one woman..."** [...]

...therefore as a breach of that holy relation may occasion divorce, so remarriage after a divorce granted on grounds explicitly stated in Scripture or implicit in the gospel of Christ may be sanctioned in keeping with his redemptive gospel, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident, and a firm purpose of and endeavor after Christian marriage is manifest. [...]

However, **the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows so that marriage dies at the heart and the union becomes intolerable**; yet only **in cases of extreme, unrepented-of, and irremediable unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual)** should separation or divorce be considered. **Such separation or divorce is accepted as permissible only because of the failure of one or both of the partners**, and does not lessen in any way the divine intention for indissoluble union” (“Of Divorce and Remarriage.” *Book of Order*. Ch. 24-25 <oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boc.pdf>).

- The PCUSA’s Constitution states, **“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall give full expression to the rich diversity within its membership and shall provide means which will assure a greater inclusiveness leading to wholeness in its emerging life. Persons of all racial ethnic groups, different ages, both sexes, various disabilities, diverse geographical areas, different theological positions consistent with the Reformed tradition, as well as different marital conditions (married, single, widowed, or divorced) shall be guaranteed full participation and access to representation in the decision making of the church”** (“Full Participation.” *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* <pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/publications/2009-2011-boo.pdf>).

Scriptures: Matt. 5:31-32, 19:9, **Mark 10:5-12, Luke 16:18**, 1 Cor. 6:16-18, 7:10-15, Heb. 13:4.

The End Times & Afterlife:

- The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. believes, “We are to believe that, at the last day, there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and **the selfsame bodies of the dead which are laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ.** The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, and incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body: and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonor by him as an offended judge” (“What are We to Believe about the Resurrection?” *Book of Order*. Q. 87 <oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boc.pdf>).
- Concerning **Heaven and Hell**, PCUSA says, **“The only official Presbyterian statement that includes any comment on hell since the 1930s is a 1974 paper on universalism adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.** It warns of judgment and promises hope, acknowledging that these two ideas seem to be ‘in tension or even in paradox.’ **In the end, the statement concedes, how God works redemption and judgment is a mystery”** (Smith, Alexa. “What Do Presbyterians Believe about Hell?” *PCUSA*. 28 Mar 2012. <gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/today/hell/>).
- Yet, the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states, **“At the day of judgment, the wicked shall be set on Christ’s left consciences, shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them**; and thereupon shall be cast out from the favorable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, **into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever”** (“What Shall Be Done to the Wicked at the Day of Judgment?” *Book of Order*. Q. 89 <oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boc.pdf>).

Scripture: Matt. 24:29-51, 25:31-46, Mark 13:24-37, Luke 21:25-36, John 14:1-4, Acts 1:9-11, **1 Cor. 15:23-28, 50-53**, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thess. 2:1-12, 2 Pet. 3:1-13, Rev. 19-22:5.