



# Presbyterian Church U.S.A. [PC(USA)]

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## Statistics 2003

Source: Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches 2005

### In the United States:

3,241,300 Members  
 11,064 Congregations  
 173 Presbyteries  
 16 Synods

### Ministry

21,248 Ministers  
 13,989 Active Ministers  
 8945 Serving Parishes

### Financial Data

Total Contributions  
 \$2,743,637,755  
 Benevolences  
 \$381,693,067

## Women in Ministry

Women have been ordained as elders (lay leaders) since 1930 and as ministers since 1956. At present, there are 3,853 ordained ministers who are women (18% of total). The *Brief Statement of Faith* affirms God "calls women and men to all ministries of the church."

## Brief History

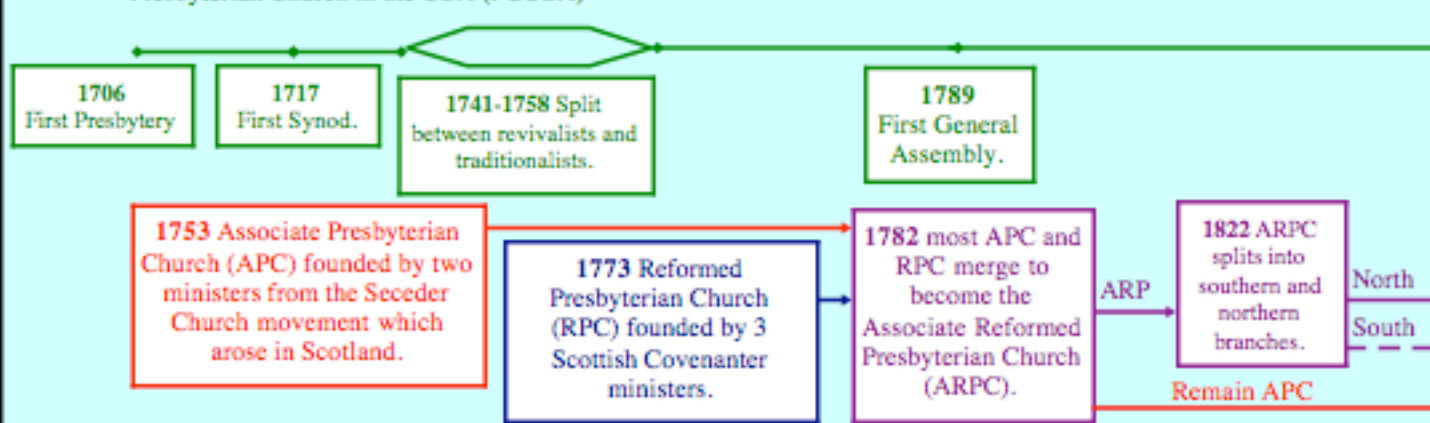
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) came into being in 1983 with the merger of the "southern branch" Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS) and the "national" United Presbyterian Church in USA (UPCUSA). The earliest of the founding denominations was begun in 1706. Since then, there have been at least 11 splits and 12 unions of the denominations that now comprise PC(USA). These denominations arose from the Reform Movement in Scotland, England, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, and France. During the 16th Century, John Knox studied with the Reformed theologian John Calvin. John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister from New Jersey, was the only active clergy to sign the Declaration of Independence.

## Organization

The constitution and organizational structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is laid out in the **Book of Order**. The foundational unit of governance is the local congregation. The governing body for the individual congregation is called the **Session**. Churches in a geographical region are organized into **Presbyteries**, which are in turn organized into **Synods**. The **General Assembly**, which meets each year, is the governing body of the entire denomination. When the General Assembly votes on a constitutional amendment, it is voted on by the individual Presbyteries. If a majority of Presbyteries uphold the resolution, it becomes part of the constitution for the denomination.

**Ministers of the Word and Sacrament** are ordained and installed to serve as pastors by the Presbytery with congregational approval. The pastors are not members of the churches that they serve. **Elders** and **Deacons** are members of the congregation who have been elected and ordained to service within the congregation and other governing bodies of the church. **Presbyters** are elders and ministers. An equal number of elders and ministers serve at the Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly meetings. The elected head of the General Assembly is the **Moderator**.

## Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA)



## Major Doctrines/Theology

Some of the principles articulated by John Calvin remain at the core of Presbyterian beliefs. Among these are the sovereignty of God, the authority of the scripture, justification by grace through faith and the priesthood of all believers. What these principles mean is that God is the supreme authority throughout the universe. Our knowledge of God and God's purpose for humanity comes from the Bible, particularly what is revealed in the New Testament through the life of Jesus Christ. Our **salvation** (justification) through Jesus is God's generous gift to us and not the result of our own accomplishments. It is everyone's job—ministers and lay people alike - to share this Good News with the whole world. That is also why the Presbyterian church is governed at all levels by a combination of clergy and laity, men and women.

Presbyterians confess their beliefs through statements that have been adopted over the years and are contained in the **Book of Confessions**. These statements reflect our understanding of God and what God expects of us at different times in history, but all are faithful to the fundamental beliefs described above. Even though we share these common beliefs, Presbyterians understand that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and it is up to each individual to understand what these principles mean in his or her life.

## Worship and Sacrament

Guidelines for Presbyterian worship are set forth in the "Directory for Worship" found in the *Book of Order*, which suggests that worship be ordered in terms of five major actions centered in the Word of God—gathering around the Word, proclaiming the Word, responding to the Word, the sealing of the Word, and bearing and following the Word into the world. Sunday worship usually includes the recitation of all or part of one of the Presbyterian confessions, often the **Nicene** or **Apostle's Creed**, or *A Brief Statement of Faith*. The actual order of worship, however, is up to the minister and the Session of an individual congregation.

**Baptism** and **Lord's Supper** are the two Sacraments that Presbyterians celebrate. Infants, children, or adults are generally baptized during the worship service by pouring or sprinkling; immersion is rarely used. The Lord's Supper is celebrated regularly, with most congregations celebrating monthly. All baptized Christians are welcomed to share in the Lord's Supper, including baptized children.

## Ecumenical Involvement

The PC(USA) has a history of offering leadership in inter-denominational activities. During the 1800's the Presbyterian Church had an agreement with the Congregational Church (now the **United Church of Christ**) regarding western expansion. During the 19th century, the PCUSA became active in several voluntary societies for mission and evangelism. In the mid-20th century, Presbyterian minister Eugene Carson Blake preached a sermon in 1960 that led to the foundation of the **Consultation on Church Union (COCU)** in 1962. He went on to become the General Secretary of the **World Council of Churches (WCC)** in 1966. The PC(USA) is also an active member of the **National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC)** and the **World Alliance of Reformed Church (WARC)**. In 1997, the PC(USA) entered into a relationship of "full communion" with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC).

1838-1869 New School/Old School Split.

1861 Southern Presbyteries withdraw to become the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States (later changed to PCUS).

PCUS

Remain PCUSA

1983

PCUS and UPCUSA merge to become the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA).

1858 remaining APC churches and northern branch ARPC merge to become the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA).

1958  
PCUSA and  
UPCNA  
merge to  
become  
UPCUSA.

## Important Resources

*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part I: The Book of Confessions. Part II: The Book of Order.* Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Distribution Service, 2005-2005).

*Book of Common Worship* (1993).