



Welcome to Trinity's  
Town Hall Meeting



# Session's Concern:

- Session's concern is that the PC(USA) is moving away from the orthodox theology of the Reformed and Evangelical approach to Scripture
- This is evidenced by the increasing tolerance of different and contradictory theological convictions which were not accepted in the past and have now been accepted by PC(USA)





# Four Areas of Concern

- ✦ Unique Authority of Scripture
- ✦ Jesus is the only way to Salvation
- ✦ Authority in the Church
- ✦ Teaching of the Church



# Unique Authority of Scripture



- Book of Order 2011-2013: "In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgement, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." F-1.0203
- PC(USA) Example: "I preach on the Bible about as much as any other preacher. I don't preach on it as if it were a book to believe. I don't find most of it particularly believable, at least in the way that we were supposed to believe it..." Rev. John Shuck. March 4th, 2012 Holston Presbytery
- Session's Concern: Such treatment of the Word represents a submission to Scripture based in human interpretation, and is contrary to guidance of the Holy Spirit's proclamation about the Word.





# Jesus is the Only Way

- Reformed teaching: Jesus Christ, God incarnate, by his death and bodily resurrection is the unique and only mediator between God and humans, and that there is salvation of eternal life in no other person or thing, cf, Acts 4:12
- PC(USA): On November 17, 2010, Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church Pastor Morgan Murray wrote "in recent presbytery meetings we have been encouraged to pray in the name of the Triune God, Yahweh, and Allah. At the 2001 General Assembly, a motion was made to declare "the singular, saving lordship of Jesus Christ." That motion was defeated when the assembly was persuaded that such a statement was disrespectful to "other religions."
- Session's Concern: Some in the PC(USA) believe that Jesus is not the only way to the Father, but other religions may also have a way to God outside of Jesus.





# Authority in the Church

- Former Book of Order: "The members of a particular church voluntarily put themselves under the leadership of their officers, whom they elect. The session, which consists of the pastor or co-pastor, the associate pastor, the elders in active service, is the governing body in a particular church." book of Order G-7.0102 (2009-2011)
- New Book of Order: "Each Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) shall be governed by this Constitution. The members of a congregation put themselves under the leadership of the session and the higher councils (presbytery, synod, and General Assembly)." Book of Order G-1.0103 (2011-2013)
- Session's Concern: Rather than trust Jesus' leading upon the local Session and congregation, PC(USA) churches may be directed under a hierarchical system of government to operate in a manner contrary to reform beliefs and Jesus' will.





# Teaching in the Church

- Former Book of Order: "The Pastor is responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word..." g-6.0202b (2009-2011)
- New Book of Order: "Teaching elders (pastors)... Shall preach and teach the faith of the Church..." g-2.0501 (2011-2013)
- Session's Concern: Pastors will be allowed discretion to preach and teach any 'faith' held by local church rather than being directed and held responsible to preach the Word of God.





# Trinity's Opinion

- ✦ 1. Stay in PC(USA): Continue to stand for the Truth, Develop a new strategy to stand for the Truth
- ✦ 2. Seek Dismissal from the PC(USA) and join another reformed Denomination: Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) or Another Presbyterian Denomination
- ✦ 3. Why not become a non-denominational church? This is not currently permissible within the PC(USA) constitution.





# The PC(USA) 2012: How we got 'here'





- For 250 years, Presbyterianism was a dominant force in American culture, planting thousands of churches and establishing scores of colleges and seminaries and hundreds of hospitals. For the 100 years between 1850 and 1950, Presbyterians were the greatest mission-sending denomination the world had ever seen.





- ✦ In 1910 the General Assembly (GA) of the Presbyterian Church USA adopted a set of five fundamentals of the faith for Presbyterian ministers: the inerrancy of the Bible, the Virgin birth of Christ, Christ's substitutionary atonement, Jesus' bodily resurrection, and the authority of miracles.





- In 1927 GA declared that individual presbyteries, not the national church body, would have authority over ordination. This led to a wide diversity of belief over the five fundamentals of the faith and in ordination standards.





- ✦ By 1950 the denomination adopted a corporate paradigm, a leadership structure modeled after the prevailing business culture. In this model, the historical Presbyterian sense of a bottom-up denomination was inverted and congregations began to be perceived as serving the denomination instead of the other way around.





- ✦ In 1967 a Book of Confessions was adopted, containing The Confession of 1967. This Confession undermined the Biblical confessions that preceded it, and contains ordination vows in which the person being ordained acknowledges that the Bible may contain the Word of God but is "nevertheless the words of men" and promises only to be "guided" by the confessions of the church. (1967 was the last year our denomination grew in membership totals)





- ✦ In the 1970's there was a theological shift which paved the way for the denomination's foray into politics. Although the shift is not easily documented by looking at official actions of the GA, the theology in practice among the staff of PCUSA functionally redefined "salvation" to mean "liberation", a shift from "being a sinner, saved by grace from above" to "being an essentially good person, saved by being liberated from external oppression".





- In 1978 a Mission Consultation report was adopted which effectively redefined "Missions", the word commonly used by the church to describe its response to the Great Commission, sending evangelical missionaries throughout the world to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and make disciples, to be replaced by "Mission", which was defined as "everything the institutional church does." This freed GA leaders to spend "missions" money for political causes. Causes included support of Castro in Cuba, Mexican rebels in Latin America





- ✦ In 1996 explicit language was added to the Book of Order requiring that officers of the church live in fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness.





- In 2001 the GA formed a Peace, Unity and Purity (PUP) task force, which in 2006 returned its findings to the GA, which functionally made the fidelity requirement a local option.





- ✦ Passage in 2011 of GA Amendment 10A eliminated the explicit requirement that officers of the church live in fidelity in marriage between a man and woman or chastity in singleness





- The new Form of Government (nFOG) document of General Assembly, adopted in July 2011, declares that what any one council, (session, presbytery, synod or General Assembly) does in relationship to ordination is an act of the whole church. All PCUSA churches pay dues to the Board of Pensions, which includes benefits for abortions and is likely to be extended to provide benefits to same sex partners and plan members.





- ✦ Hundreds of Evangelical churches have left or are considering leaving PCUSA, leaving a higher percentage of liberal churches in PCUSA, with half of the denominations remaining churches having less than 100 members



# So what's next

- ✦ Town Hall Meeting
- ✦ "Period of Discernment"
- ✦ Congregational Vote



# Town Hall Meeting

- ✦ Explain the why, how, and what of leaving PCUSA
- ✦ Is an informal meeting among Session, Pastor, and the congregation to discuss and ask questions
- ✦ Non-binding straw poll vote taken



# Period of Discernment

- ✦ Session notifies Presbytery of our intention to consider leaving PCUSA
- ✦ Is a process to allow the Presbytery to discern each individual members's position (process lasts approximately 6 months)
- ✦ Presbytery communicates with the congregation via letters, large and small group visits, etc.



# Congregational Vote

- ✦ Formal meeting to vote on whether to leave or remain in PCUSA a
- ✦ If majority agrees to leave, Session discusses the process with the Presbytery (Discussion includes buildings, property, cost, etc.)



# Frequently asked Questions

- Why a Straw Poll? - It gives Session an understanding of whether members are in favor of leaving PCUSA a
- Must Session act upon the Straw Poll results?- No, the poll is informational and non-binding



# Frequently asked Questions

- ✦ Why leave PCUSA?- The main reason is the PCUSA's rejection of our theology and General Assembly's change to:
- ✦ Unique Authority of Scripture
- ✦ Jesus is the only way to Salvation
- ✦ Authority in the Church
- ✦ Teaching of the Church



# Frequently asked Questions

- ✦ Same Sex impact to Trinity- today, Pastor has the option to not perform a same sex marriage ceremony("may perform")
- ✦ In the future, Genreral Assembly may require him to perform a same sex marriage ceremony ("shall perform")



# Frequently asked Questions

- ✦ Have any churches left our Presbytery? -Yes both Fallbrook and Honolulu
- ✦ Are any churches considering leaving like Trinity? -Yes, Lakeside and Korean
- ✦ Have any churches decided to stay in the Presbytery? Yes, Westminster and San Diego
- ✦ What about the 30 churches in our Presbytery? Their Pastor/session have chosen to not discuss the issue



# Frequently asked Questions

- ✦ Who owns the church property?- the Presbytery of San Diego
- ✦ How much will it cost to leave?- we will not know until after the official Congregational vote. If the congregation votes to leave, then the Session meets and works out an agreement with the Presbytery
- ✦ Is there a cost formula?- No, it is case by case. Each presbytery chooses the cost. For some, it's 1% of per capita; others paid 10% of their annual income



# Frequently asked Questions

- Is it a simple majority vote?- No. At least 85% of the Congregation must vote to leave PCUSA
- What happens if the vote is less than 85% to leave?- Presbytery may dismiss the Pastor and Session. Presbytery may assume Jurisdiction of the Church and Property. Presbytery will invite those who vote to leave.
- What about the 15% who remain?- they would stay with the property and buildings. Presbytery would likely send in temporary pastor and elders from other churches to form a new session.



# Frequently asked Questions

- Once started, can we stop the departure process?- At any time during the process, Session may vote to remain with PCUSA





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