

Presbyterianism 101: What it Means to be Presbyterian

I. Introduction

- A. Presbyterian comes from the Greek word for elder (*presbyteros*) - it simply means rule by elder (Acts 20:17-35, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-16)
- B. Other forms of church government include congregational (Baptists) and episcopal (Episcopalians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Catholics, and Methodists)

II. Three Church Offices

- A. Pastor - preach God's Word, administer sacraments, and shepherd the people
- B. Elder - shepherd the people, lead in vision, and govern the church - authority
- C. Deacon - serve by caring for physical needs of people and the building - service

III. Three Church Courts

- A. Session - elders and pastor(s) of each local church
- B. Presbytery - pastors and elder representatives of churches in a particular area
- C. General Synod - pastors and elder representatives of all ARP churches

IV. Three Marks of the True Church (as established in the Reformation)

- A. Faithful preaching of God's Word
- B. Proper administration of the sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper)
- C. Exercise of church discipline (rebuke, suspension, deposition, excommunication)

V. Seven Membership Vows

- A. Do you confess that you are a sinner in the sight of God; that you deserve His punishment; that you are unable to save yourself; and that you are without hope of salvation except for God's love and mercy?
- B. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners; and do you receive and trust in Him alone for your salvation?
- C. Do you accept the Bible, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God; and that it is the only perfect rule of faith and how to live?
- D. Do you promise to trust in the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit so that you can live all of life as a Christian, following the example set by Jesus Christ?
- E. Do you promise to exercise faithful stewardship of God's resources entrusted to you for the furtherance of God's Kingdom and purposes?
- F. Do you accept that the doctrines and principles of the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church are founded upon the Scriptures?
- G. In loving obedience, do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of this church, promising to seek the peace, purity, and prosperity of this congregation as long as you are a member of it?