

Lesson One: PCA Church Polity and Structure

The Presbyterian Church in America

- Brief History
 - o Officially founded and organized as *The National Presbyterian Church* on Dec. 7, 1973, at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL.
 - o Officially changed to the *Presbyterian Church in America* in 1974.
 - o The PCA split from the PCUSA over growing theological liberalism, especially surrounding women's roles in the ministry.
 - o In 1982, the RPCES merged with the PCA. Growing ever since.
- PCA motto: *Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission.*

PCA Polity

- Ordained Church Officers (Acts 6:1-7, 14:23)
 - o Deacons (Acts 6:1-7; I Tim. 3:8-13)
 - Diaconate
 - BCO 9-2: Mercy ministry, church property, budget
 - Subordinate to the session
 - o Elders: *Presbuteros* (Titus 1:5; I Tim. 3:1-7)
 - One office, two types
 - Teaching Elders (I Tim. 5:17 & BCO 8-4 and 5)
 - Ruling Elders (BCO 8-8 and 9)
 - Shepherd, oversight (discipline and doctrine), spiritual rule (Matt. 16:19)
 - o Difference with R. Baptists (their elders = our pastors/TEs, their deacons = our elders)
- Church Courts
 - o Session (Titus 1:5)
 - A plurality of elders
 - o Presbytery
 - Session and Presbytery are open to all members to attend, unless in executive session.
 - o General Assembly (Acts 15)
- We are grassroots up. Top-down (RCC, EO, Scottish Pres.). Congregationalists (many Baptists).

Membership at FPC

- Membership requirements
 - o A credible profession of Faith (Acts 2:38-39, 16:31)
 - o Willingness to take and hold to the vows (covered in week 4)
 - o Difference between what is required of members and officers
 - Primary, secondary, and tertiary issues
- Joining Process
 - o Training/This Class
 - o Meeting with the session
 - o Taking the vows before the elders
 - o Standing before the congregation to publicly take the vows

Worship at FPC

- The Atmosphere
 - o Commitment to study the word and live it out
 - o FPC has its name for a reason: fellowship (I John 4:7-12)
 - o Building each other up in the truth (not lying or feel good)
 - 2 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:12, 16, and 29
- Normal Worship practice
 - o Expository Preaching (Acts 20:25-27; 2 Tim. 3:16, 4:2; Heb. 4:12)
 - Reasons to preach through books
 - They were written to be read through
 - Prevents hobby horses and cherry picking
 - Forces us to address difficult topics and passages
 - o Be as balanced as the Bible is balanced (in quantity and quality)
 - Makes us biblically well-rounded
 - o Philosophy of the OOW
 - The sermon is the logical center
 - Following themes through the service for emphasis, memory, and nuance
 - Some use a covenant renewal style, others sequential
 - o Psalter Run-Down (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
 - o Walk through the elements
 - Worship is a conversation
 - God always gets the first and last word
 - Walk through bulletin