



Church Government

AND THE HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (ARPC)

1

Why have Church Government?

Because of Sin

Because of a Spirit of Independence

Because it is Biblical

2

Christ is the Head of the Church

And He [God] put all things under His [Jesus] feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23 ESV)

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Christ is the Head of the Church

And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the **body of Christ**, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...we are to grow up in every way into **Him who is the head, into Christ**, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16 ESV)

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Old Testament Church Government

Exodus 18:13-27 – ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. ²⁶ They judged the people at all times;

Leviticus 4:15 – “Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slain before the LORD.”

Joshua 24:1 – Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

1 Kings 8:1, 3 – Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' *households* of the sons of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David, which is Zion. . . ³ Then all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

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New Testament Church Government

Acts 6:1-6 – ² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.”

Acts 14:23 – And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:28 – “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

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New Testament Church Government

More References to Officers in the Church

- 1 Timothy 3:1-6, 3:7-13, 5:17-20
- Titus 1:5-9
- Hebrews 13:17
- 1 Peter 5:1-4
- James 5:14

Qualifications of Elders and Deacons

- 1 Timothy 1:1-13
- Titus 1:5-9

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Functional Qualifications of Elders and Deacons

- Relation to God
- Relation to Others
- Relation to Self
- Relation to Family

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Relation to God

Holding firmly to scriptural truths (1 Tim. 3:9; Titus 1:9)

Upright and holy (Titus 1:8)

Able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9)

Tested (1 Tim. 3:10)

Above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2, 9; Titus 1:6)

Not a new convert (1 Tim. 3:6)

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Relation to Others

Sincere (1 Tim. 3:8)

Respectable (1 Tim. 3:2,8)

Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)

Not quarrelsome (1 Tim. 3:3)

Not violent but gentle (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)

Good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim. 3:7)

Not overbearing (Titus 1:7)

Not a pursuer of dishonest gain (1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:7)

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Relation to Self

Disciplined (Titus 1:8)

Temperate (1 Tim. 3:2, 8; Titus 1:7)

Not a lover of money (1 Tim. 3:3)

Self-controlled (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)

Not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)

Not given to drunkenness (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7)

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Relation to Family

Having one wife (1 Tim. 3:2, 12)

Having obedient children (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12; Titus 1:6)

Managing family well (1 Timothy 3:4, 12; Titus 1:6)

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Other Texts on New Testament Government

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1-4 ESV)

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Other Texts on NT Government (cont.)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. (James 5:14 ESV)

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Different Forms of Church Government

Episcopal

Presbyterian

Congregational

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Episcopal Government

- Greek – *episkopos* (overseer)
- Hierarchical structure
- Ultimate authority to govern in the hands of the Bishops
- Large distinction between laity and clergy
- Argument heavily based upon church history
- Designed with top-down authority.

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Episcopal Government

Problems

Little to no New Testament support

No apostolic succession

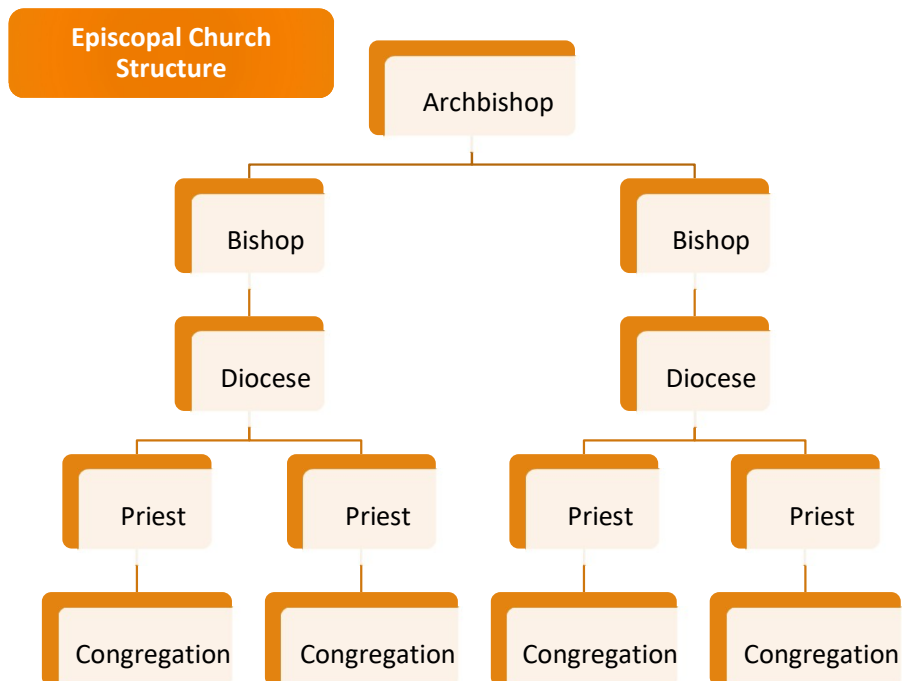
Uses James (Acts 15), Timothy, and Titus as example of Bishops

Disagrees with the doctrine of the “Priesthood of all believers”

- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Denominations: Episcopal, Methodist, Roman Catholic

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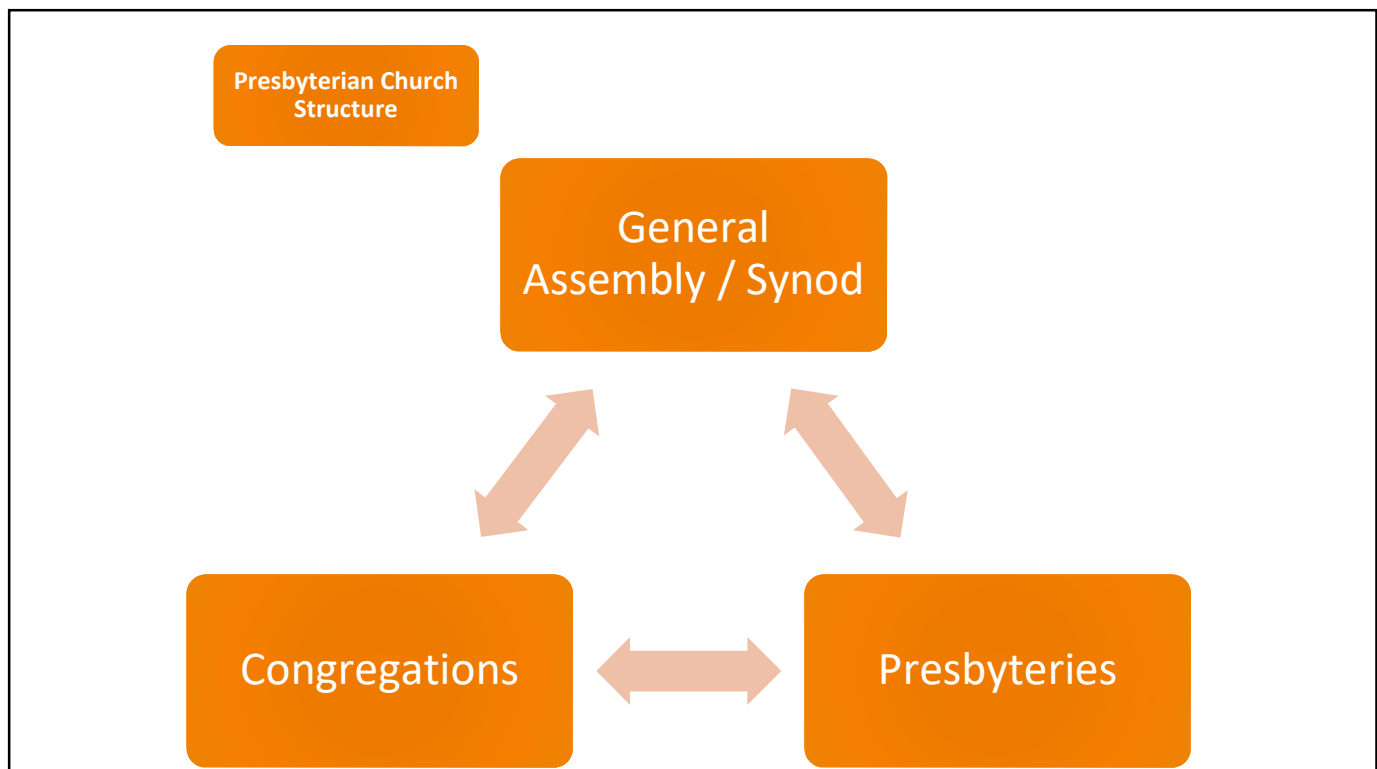
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Presbyterian Government

- Representative Government
- Checks and balances
- Relies heavily on Acts 15 and 16 – Council of Jerusalem
- Sees establishment of Elders and Deacons in the New Testament as the repeatable pattern
- Designed to be bottom up (i.e., Representatives take the concerns of the Congregations)
- Plurality of Elders

Adherents: PCA, PCUSA, EPC, ARP, OPC, Free Presbyterian Church, Church of Scotland, etc.

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Congregationalist Government

- Believe in autonomous rule (i.e., no way subject to other congregations)
- Believe the local congregation is the final court of appeal, not Bishop, council, or convention
- “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:17)
- Argue that Paul’s letters place the final responsibility to govern on the individual congregations (cf. 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2; Gal. 1; 2 Tim. 4)
- Should believe in a plurality of Elders

Adherents: Baptists, Non-Denominational, Independents, etc.

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Congregationalist
Church Structure

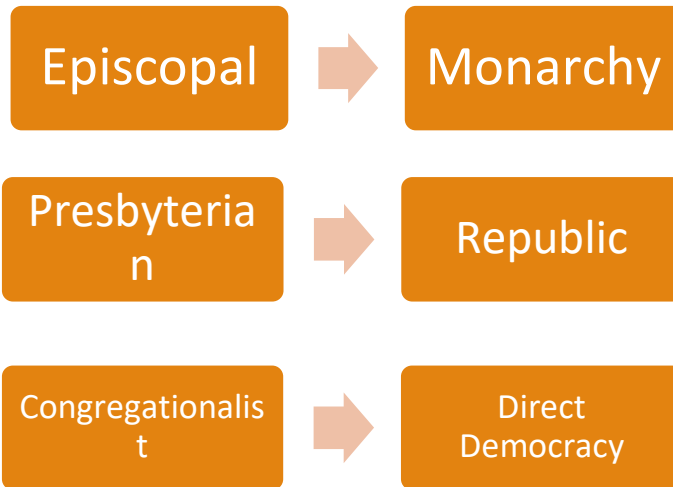
Congregation

Congregation

Congregation

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Corresponding Models of Government



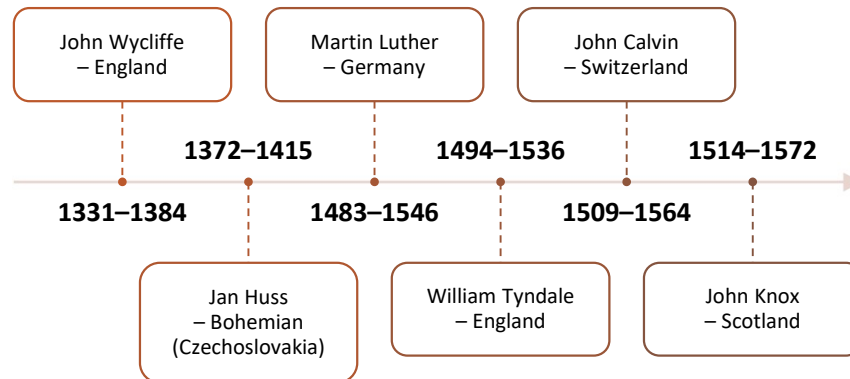
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The Associate
Reformed
Presbyterian
Church (ARPC)



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European Beginnings



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European Beginnings – The Associate Presbytery of Scotland

Organized at Gairney Bridge on Dec. 6, 1733

Ministers: Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff

Known as “Seceders” since they seceded from Church of Scotland

Reasons for “seceding”:

1. A mongrel form of Church Government – Episcopal form of government forced on church of Scotland in 1661 until Presbyterianism restored in 1689; episcopal influence still felt
2. Some Doctrines not in agreement with Westminster Standards – Some Arminian and Socian (non-trinitarian) influences
3. The Practice of Patronage – wealthy landowner selected pastors with little voice from the congregation in the matter

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What you get with Patronage!



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European Beginnings – The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland

Organized on August 1, 1743

Ministers: John McMillan and Thomas Nairn

Known as “Covenantors” as they descended from those who fought for the “crown rights” of King James VII and II

Characterized by:

1. Adherence to the Westminster Standards
2. Continued to practice “covenanting” (bound by oath to defend the faith)
3. Held to divine right of Presbyterianism
4. Sang Psalms only
5. Weary of political institutions that would compromise crown rights of King James VII and II

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American Beginnings

- 1685 – Covenanters come to America (New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina)
- 1752 – First Reformed Presbyterian Minister
- 1782 – Two Denominations join to form the Associate Reformed Synod in Philadelphia
- Four Synods: New York, Pennsylvania, Scioto (Ohio), and the Carolinas
- 1803 – Synod of South Carolina organized at Old Brick Church
- 1804 – Theological Seminary formed in New York (Union)
- 1822 – Synod of South Carolina becomes its own denomination
- 1839 – Erskine College founded
- 1921 – Bonclarken purchased

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The Old Brick Church



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Distinctives of the ARPC

1. Gospel-Centered Preaching
2. Church Planting
3. Christian Education
4. Multi-Generational Ministry
5. Culturally-Responsible Ministry

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**The
ARPC
Seal**

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The ARPC Seal

Shield – complete faith in God

Cross – redemptive work of God the Son

Circle (or Nimbus) – medieval symbol representing God the Father

Dove – represents God the Holy Spirit

Book – the Bible

Burning Bush – the indestructability of God’s Holy Word

Alpha & Omega – final authority of Christ the “beginning and end”

The Scroll – bears the motto “In Thy Light Shall We See Light” – Ps. 36:9

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