

Skyview Presbyterian Church

# Discovery Class



We are a Reformed and Missional Community, equipping Christians to engage their world

Skyview Presbyterian Church  
is a Congregation of  
the Presbyterian Church in America  
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# Skyview Presbyterian Church

Doctrine

SKYVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
THEOLOGY, PART 1  
DOCTRINES OF GRACE

The Presbyterian Church in America is a church which is generally understood as evangelical. Evangelical means there are essential doctrines that separate us from churches that are not Christian at all, as in The Church of The Latter Day Saints, Islam, Christian Science, Jehovah Witnesses, etc. These doctrines are summarized in Appendix A.

However, Presbyterians are not only Evangelical. We are also Reformed in our doctrine in that we emphasize certain other Biblical doctrines. While some of these distinctives may be similar or identical to beliefs of other denominations, the combination of all of them is what makes us Presbyterian in our Theology.

The Doctrines of Grace is a phrase for identifying one perspective of Reformed Theology. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 emphasize other perspectives.

Presbyterians believe that the Bible teaches the absolute sovereignty of God (that is, that God causes all things to come about as they do), and the absolute responsibility of man (that is, that man is solely responsible for the decisions and actions he undertakes). This becomes a particularly challenging balance when it comes to the important area of salvation. Presbyterians believe that God is sovereign in salvation and yet man is responsible for his decision in accepting or rejecting the gospel.

In this important area of our salvation, historically, this has come to be known as the Doctrines of Grace. There are five doctrines which Presbyterians believe concerning our salvation which are known as the Five Points of Calvinism. (Taken from the name -- John Calvin, the 16th Century theologian who was the first to set these doctrines forth in his Institutes of the Christian Religion.)

These doctrines develop from the foundational truth emphasized in Point 1, which states, according to R.C. Sproul, *That we are sinners not because we sin rather we sin because we are sinners.*

The Doctrines of Grace Summarized  
Five Points of Calvinism -- (T.U.L.I.P.)

I. "T" Total Depravity or Total Inability

Statement of Doctrine: Natural man is never able to do any good that is fundamentally pleasing to God, and, in fact, does evil all the time.

Explanation: Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to believe the gospel savingly. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not, indeed he cannot, choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ, it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation; it's God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

II. "U" Unconditional Election

Statement of Doctrine: If men are totally depraved and if some are still saved, then it is obvious that the reason some are saved and some are lost rests entirely with God. Unconditional election means God's choice does not rest on anything that man does.

Explanation: God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election, therefore, was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

III. "L" Limited Atonement (Definite Atonement)

Statement of the Doctrine: The term limited does not mean that the atonement is limited in its power to save. On the contrary, the atonement of Christ is unlimited in its power, Christ saves to the uttermost and the atonement is of infinite worth and value. But, the unlimited atonement of Christ is limited in its scope or extent; Christ intended to and actually did remove the guilt of the sins of a limited number of people, namely, those whom God has loved with a special love from eternity, the elect.

Explanation: Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation. Those who deny definite Atonement insist that Christ's work of atonement was designed by God to atone for the sins of everyone in the world. It made possible the salvation of everyone, but made

certain the salvation of no one. It's design is therefore both unlimited and indefinite. The effect of Christ's work on the cross is limited to those who believe, that is, Christ's atonement does not avail for unbelievers. Not everyone is saved through His death. Everyone also agrees that the merit of Christ's death is sufficient to pay for the sins of all human beings. Some put it this way: Christ's atonement is sufficient for all, but efficient only for some (the elect).

#### IV. "I" Irresistible Grace

Statement of Doctrine: Grace is undeserved favor. Irresistible means that when God has chosen some to be saved and when He sends His Spirit to change them from being hateful to being loving, no one can resist Him.

Explanation: In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

#### V. "P" Perseverance of the Saints

Statement of Doctrine from the Westminster Confession of Faith, 17:1 They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally, nor finally, fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

Explanation: All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

#### Further Reading:

Edgar, William, Truth in all its Glory

Forster, Greg, The Joy of Calvinism

Keller, Tim, The Reason for God

Kennedy, James Truths That Transform, Christian Doctrines for Your Life Today

Packer, J.I. Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God

Palmer, Edwin The Five Points of Calvinism

Sproul, R. C. Essential Truths of the Christian Faith

Steele and Thomas The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended and Documented

## Brief Bible Study

The Five Points are:

**Point 1:** Read the following Scripture verses and seek to answer the two questions below:

*Psalm 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

*Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

*Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

*Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

1. What doctrine would you draw from these verses regarding the spiritual state of natural man?
2. What would be a good name for this doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

**Point 2:** Read the following verses and seek to answer the two questions at the end of this section:

*John 6:37, 39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.*

*Ephesians 2: 8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

*Ephesians 1:4-5,9,11 For he (God) chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ. In him we are also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.*

*Romans 9:11-16 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad in order that God's purpose in election might stand -- not by works but by him who calls -- she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.*

1. What doctrine would you draw from these verses regarding conditions, if any, God established for man to fulfill before he could be saved?
2. What would be a good name for this doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

**Point 3:** Read the following verses (focusing on God's intent for Christ's work, his life and his death on the cross) and seek to answer the two questions below:

*John 10:26 ... but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.*

*John 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd: I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*Ephesians 5:25, 27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

1. What doctrine would you draw from these verses to answer the question For whom did Christ die (i.e. what was God's intent in Christ's death)?
2. What would be a good name for this doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

**Point 4:** Read the following verses and seek to answer the two questions at the end of this section:

*Romans 8:29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

*John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.*

*2Thessalonians 2:13-14 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1. What doctrine would you draw from these verses concerning the unwavering determination of God to call His people? (or, Can man resist if God has called?)
2. What would be a good name for this doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

**Point 5:** Read the following verses:

*John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.*

*John 10:27, 29 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*

*Ephesians 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of His glory.*

1. What doctrine would you draw from these verses concerning whether or not you can lose your salvation?
2. What would be a good name for this doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

You should draw from this study the fact that God is sovereign in salvation. Many throughout history and today hold to a contrary system called Arminianism after the sixteenth century theologian Jacob Arminius which emphasizes that man by nature has the ability with the help of the Holy Spirit to choose God and know the benefits of salvation by the exercise of his own will.

SKYVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
THEOLOGY, PART 2  
THE DOCTRINE OF THE COVENANT

Another doctrine that is essential to Reformed Theology is the Doctrine of the Covenant or Covenant Theology. The below is a paper written by Dr. Mark Futato, Ph. D, former Hebrew Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in California.

COVENANT: LET THE READER UNDERSTAND

Bible texts are like textiles, for the word textiles means woven. To understand the Bible you need to see not only the changing patterns and colors, but also the threads from which the whole cloth is woven. Running through the whole design of the Bible are the cords of the covenant. "Let the reader understand," says the Bible, and let the following strands of covenant open your understanding.

**I. COVENANT AND THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE**

The Bible is about how God relates to us. Leviticus 26:12 summarizes this relationship with these words, "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (see also Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 30:22). The Bible itself describes God's relationship with us as a covenant (e.g., Deut. 29:12 15; 2 Cor. 3).

In the world of the Bible, covenants were made to bind parties in relationship to each other. Typically, one party was superior (the Great King) and the other, subordinate (the Servant). Both parties enjoyed benefits and assumed responsibilities. For example, the Great King enjoyed the benefit of goods and services the servant was bound to provide. The main benefit for the servant was the military protection the Great King was pledged to provide.

Joshua 9:1-10:15 describes just such a covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites (the subordinate) were responsible to serve Israel as "woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD" (Josh. 9:27). Israel (the superior) was responsible to provide military deliverance (Josh. 10:6), a benefit enjoyed by the Gibeonites when attacked by a five king coalition (Josh. 10:1-5).

In God's covenant relationship with us, God is the Great King: "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Ps. 48:2). We are His servants: "Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, 'Let the LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant'" (Ps. 35:27).

As the Great King, God has taken upon Himself the responsibility to do everything necessary for our deliverance, our salvation. It was necessary for God the Son to live a perfect life of righteousness in our place, die on the cross for our sins, and be raised for

our justification. We enjoy all the benefits of this salvation; the Great King calls us, justifies us, adopts us, makes us holy, and will at last make us perfectly glorious.

As God's servants we have covenant responsibilities to our Great King. Fundamentally, we are responsible to trust in the Great King for our deliverance and to obey His commands out of love and gratitude for His salvation. The Great King enjoys the benefit of gaining glory to Himself through our service.

The Bible is about God's relationship with His people. This relationship is described as a covenant. Understanding the covenant is, therefore, essential for understanding the message of the Bible.

## WHAT IS A COVENANT?

According to Dr. Meredith Kline, a covenant consists of *a divinely sanctioned commitment or oath*. (See the note below to read definitions from other authors.) The children's First Catechism simply asks: What is a sacred covenant? Ans. *A relationship that God set up with us and guarantees by his word*, question 22.

## II. COVENANT AND THE FLOW OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a record of the history of the cosmos. This history flows from the creation of "the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1-2) to the creation of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:22). As you trace the flow of this history, you discover the flow of a series of covenants. The Bible is a record of the history of the covenants.

### A. COVENANTS WITH CREATION

**The original covenant with creation.** God's act of creation was at the same time an act of covenant making. In the beginning God appointed the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night (Gen. 1: 14-19). God created a fixed order of the day followed by night (Ps. 104: 19-23). Through Jeremiah the Lord refers to this fixed order of creation as "My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night" (Jer. 33:20; see 31:35-37 for the same concept).

The starting point for the flow of biblical history is creation and creation consists of a covenant. So the starting point for the flow of biblical history is the concept of covenant. No covenant, no creation. The flow of the Bible begins with covenant.

**The reestablished covenant with creation.** Our rebellion intensified to the point where "the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them'" (Gen. 6:6-7).

But in His grace God preserved Noah and his family (Gen. 6:8-18), and "Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive" (Gen. 6:20). After the flood, God reestablished His covenant with creation, pledging to maintain the fixed

order of creation (Gen. 8:22) and to preserve the creation from destruction by flood (Gen. 9:8-11). The flow of the Bible leads to the rainbow, the sign of this covenant with creation (Gen. 8:12-16).

These covenants with creation find their consummation in "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1) which will have its own fixed order (Rev. 21:22-27). The stage for the flow of history is set by God's covenants.

## B COVENANTS WITH PEOPLE

**1. With Adam.** *Covenant of creation (or the Covenant of Works).* In addition to the covenant with creation, God made a covenant with the human race at the time of creation, a covenant which we call the covenant of creation (or the covenant of works). God the Creator related to mankind the creature by means of covenant, Isaiah speaks of this covenant when he says, "The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant", Isa. 24:5. Hosea speaks of the same covenant, "But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with Me" (Hosea 6:7) NIV. "But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant..." NASB.

God made the covenant of creation with 'adam. The Hebrew word 'adam means both "Adam" and/or "humanity." God made the covenant of creation with Adam acting as the representative of humanity. The destiny of the whole human race lay in the performance of Adam in the Garden of Eden: his obedience would merit eternal life (hence the language "covenant of works"), but his disobedience would merit eternal death not only for himself but for all mankind, whom he represented.

When Adam sinned, the race sinned (Rom. 5:12). As a result, everyone is born guilty of Adam's first sin, lacking righteousness, corrupt in every aspect of what it means to be human, and subject to the miseries of this life as well as eternal punishment. So now for people to have a relationship with the Creator that results in life, the Creator must provide redemption. Only Jesus Christ, born through the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, was without sin and therefore able to bring this redemption.

**2. With Christ in eternity.** *The covenant of redemption.* God the Creator was not willing to leave the whole race in this condition of sin and misery. In eternity past God the Father made a covenant of redemption (also called the covenant of grace) with God the Son as the second Adam (see Rom. 5:14; 1Cor. 15:22, 45), and the Father chose some of the fallen race to be represented by the Son in this covenant. The destiny of God's elect now lay in the performance of the Son, the second Adam: the Son's obedience would merit eternal life for all whom He represented. His obedience included His living a life of perfect righteousness for the elect and His dying on the Cross to pay the penalty for their sins. By grace alone (hence the language "covenant of grace") the elect in all ages experience redemption from sin and its misery.

The covenant of redemption has been operative in history from just after the fall to the present by means of a series of covenants. Though each of these covenants has unique elements, they are all part of the one covenant of redemption.

**3. With Noah.** Wickedness increased on the earth to the point that God was about to "destroy man ... from the face of the earth" (Gen. 6:7). But as a manifestation of the covenant of redemption, Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Gen. 6:8), and God entered into a covenant with Noah and his family to provide them redemption from judgment (Gen. 6:18).

**4. With Abraham.** As history continued to flow God, in His grace, chose Abraham and entered into a covenant with him. God promised to grant Abraham 1) descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, 2) a homeland for his descendants, 3) kings to rule over his descendants, and 4) that these descendants would be a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5-7; 17:8). The rest of the Bible can be read as the fulfillment of these promises, a fulfillment that comes in two major phases; the old covenant and the new covenant.

### C. WHAT ARE THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS? AND WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM?

**The old covenant.** The old covenant is not to be equated with the whole Old Testament, but is the covenant "engraved in letters on stone" and made by God with Israel on Mount Sinai (see 2 Cor. 3:7-17). The nation of Israel, formally constituted at Sinai, was a fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham: the Israelites were as numerous as the stars in the sky (Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62), inherited the land of Canaan (Josh. 1:6; 11:23), and kings ruling over them (1 Kings 4:20-21), and the nations were blessed through them (Jonah 3). At this time, God in His grace focused the faith of His chosen people on the sacrificial system and other ceremonies that pointed to His redeeming work for them.

The old covenant was not, however, the real fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, but remained a shadow. As Hebrews 10:1 makes, clear, "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things...." For Abraham the real inheritance was not earthly but heavenly (Heb. 11:14-16). The promises made to Abraham are really fulfilled in Christ. Paul makes this same point in Colossians 2:16-17, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." The old covenant was forcing the flow of biblical history forward until Christ should come (Gal. 3:24) to inaugurate the new covenant.

**The new covenant.** The old covenant with its blood sprinkled on Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:8) could not provide redemption for the elect from their sin and its misery (Heb. 10:4). A new covenant in the blood of Christ (Luke 22:20) was needed to provide such redemption (Heb. 10:1-18). Once this new covenant was put into effect, the old covenant, made with Israel, became obsolete and soon thereafter disappeared from the flow of biblical history (Heb. 8:13).

The new covenant is superior to the old, being based on the superior ministry of Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:6). Jesus Christ is the real Israel: called out of Egypt (Matt. 2:15), passing through the waters (Matt. 3:13-17), tried in the wilderness for forty days (Matt. 4:1-11). Jesus Christ is the real seed of Abraham and the real son of David reigning over the people of God (Matt. 1:1). Jesus is the real glory filled tabernacle (John 1:14) and the real

"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). So now all who are in Christ, Jew and Gentile, are "*Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise*" (Gal. 3:29).

The covenant promises made to Abraham are really fulfilled in Christ. The elect in Christ will be an innumerable host from every nation (Rev. 7:9), who will inherit the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:1-8) under the reign of the King of kings (Rev. 19:16). Biblical history flows triumphantly towards a goal and that goal is Christ, "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us: (2 Cor. 1:20).

Covenant is essential for understanding the message and flow of the Bible, from beginning to end. "Let the reader understand."

SKYVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
THEOLOGY, PART 3  
The Doctrine of the Sacraments

A third doctrine which distinguished our church from other evangelical churches is the doctrine of the Sacraments, namely the biblical teaching concerning Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I. THE SACRAMENTS ARE UNDERSTOOD IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE COVENANT OF GRACE

We study the sacraments in light of God's covenant because in Covenant Theology the sacraments are signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace. The late Professor John Murray wrote: "In covenant theology the sacraments were always construed as holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace. Since the covenant was conceived of as one in substance under both dispensations, circumcision and the Passover under the Old Testament were regarded as having essentially the same significance as baptism and the Lord's Supper under the New Testament. As signs and seals they possessed no virtue in themselves but derived all their efficacy from the spiritual realities signified by them. As seals of the covenant they were confirmations of God's faithfulness to the promises which the covenant enshrined."

The Westminster Shorter Catechism provides the following answers about sacraments:

Q.91 How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them, (1Cor. 3:7; 1Peter 3:21).

Q.92 What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, (Gen. 17:10, Rom. 4:11).

The sacraments are non-verbal forms of communication. They were never intended to stand alone without reference to the Word of God. Sacraments confirm the Word of God so that the administering of the sacraments and the preaching of the Word go together. Salvation is not through the sacraments. Salvation is by faith in Christ. Yet where faith is present the sacraments are not ignored or neglected. They are a vital part of the worship of God and the nurture of the Christian life. (R.C. Sproul)

Q.93 Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, (Mark 16:16, 1Cor. 11:23).

II. BAPTISM AS A SIGN OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

The most distinctive feature of covenant theology in connection with the sacraments is the inference drawn from the nature of the covenant in support of paedobaptism (infant

baptism). The argument, reduced to its simplest terms, is that the seals of the covenant pertain to those to whom the covenant itself pertains; that the covenant pertains to infants is clear from Genesis 17:7 and Acts 2:39. From God's ordinance his grace extends from parents to children. Since the things signified in baptism, namely, remission of sins, regeneration, and the kingdom of heaven, belong to infants, there is no reason why the sign should not also be added.

Of particular importance is the emphasis placed on the unity and continuity of the covenant. In the words of Calvin: "For it is most evident that the covenant which the Lord once made with Abraham continues as much in force with Christians in the present day, as it did formerly with the Jews; and consequently that word is no less applicable to Christians than it was to the Jews.... Now, as the Lord, immediately after having made the covenant with Abraham, commanded it to be sealed in infants by an external sacrament, what cause will Christians assign why they should not also at this day testify and seal the same in their children?.... Since the abrogation of circumcision, there always remains the same reason for confirming it, which we have in common with the Jews.... The covenant is common, the reason for confirming it is common. Only the mode of confirming it is different; for to them it was confirmed by circumcision, which among us has been succeeded by baptism. Otherwise, if the testimony by which the Jews were assured of the salvation of their seed be taken away from us, the effect of the advent of Christ has been to render the grace of God more obscure and less attested to us than it was to the Jews. But if the covenant remains firm and unmoved, it belongs to the children of Christians now, as much as it did to the infants of the Jews under the Old Testament."

The Westminster Shorter Catechism provides the following answers about baptism:

Q.94 What is baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's, (Matt. 28:19, Rom. 6:3).

Q.95 To whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized, (Acts 2:41; Gen. 17:7-10; Acts 2:38-39).

Christian baptism, which has the form of a ceremonial washing (like John's pre-Christian baptism), is a sign from God that signifies inward cleansing. The outward signs do not automatically or magically convey the inward blessings that they signify. (J. I. Packer)

Read Jeremiah 9:25 and Colossians 2:11-12.

### III. THE LORD'S SUPPER (COMMUNION) AS A SIGN OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

The Shorter Catechism provides the following answers about the Lord's Supper:

Q.96 What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace, (Luke 22:19-20, 1Cor. 10:16).

Q.97 What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is required of them that they would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves, (1Cor. 11:28, 2 Cor. 13:5; 1Cor. 11:31; 1Cor. 11:18; 1Cor. 5:8; 1Cor. 11:27).

The Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 29, Article 7) states:

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

#### IV. COVENANTAL OBSERVANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS

At Skyview Presbyterian Church we regularly observe the sacraments. They are means of God's grace which confirm to us His redeeming work in the world today through the Covenant of Grace. We baptize adult converts and children of believers who are communicant members of the church. Only infants of believers who are members may be baptized. Only those who have publicly professed their faith and trust in Christ for eternal salvation before God's people at this church or another Christian church are to receive the Lord's Supper. I Corinthians 11:27-32 brings stern warning to those who would participate in an unworthy manner. For this reason children, even though they have been baptized, are not to participate in the Supper until the elders have examined them for communicant membership.

Participation in the Supper both manifests and requires an understanding of the meaning of union with Christ in his death, an understanding that lies beyond the level of maturity that is attained in infancy or early childhood.

The difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper is pointedly stated in the Larger Catechism:

Q.177 Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?

A. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and engrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine,

to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

SKYVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
THEOLOGY, PART 4  
PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Skyview is a mission congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The PCA was founded in 1973 when a number of churches of the Southern Presbyterian Church became concerned over the growing liberalism of that denomination. Seeking to remain true to the principles of the Reformation which stressed the absolute trustworthiness and authority of Holy Scripture, these congregations banded together to form a new faithful expression of the historic Presbyterianism established by John Knox in Scotland which came to full expression in 1692.

The denominational headquarters is in Atlanta, Georgia. Each year representatives from each church of the PCA meet for a General Assembly. Three times a year representatives from each church of our Presbytery meet. Our Presbytery, the Rocky Mountain Presbytery, is composed of the PCA churches located in Colorado and Wyoming. The Presbytery and General Assembly serve as the higher "courts" of our denomination.

The word "Presbyterian" comes from the Greek word "Presbuteros" which means "elder."

It means that churches are to be governed by elders (presbyters), which are elected by the people of the congregation. In the following material, we will see exactly what an elder is to do. This system of leadership and organization of the church is established by God's Word, the Bible, and is one of the main reasons Christians should enter into formal membership of the local church. Membership signals your step of obedience to Christ to be under the authority of God's ordained church leaders for purposes of care, spiritual nurture, service, discipline, and accountability.

FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT: PRESBYTERIAN OR REPRESENTATIVE

1. WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH? Christ is the Head of the Church and the source of its authority. Ephesians 1:22, 4:15, 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 2:19
2. Christ exercises His authority by means of the Word of God. Matthew 13:37; Mark 4:34; Luke 8:11, 24:27
3. Christ has given power to the Church. Matthew 16:19, 18:18; John 20:23; Acts 15:4-6; Hebrews 13:17
4. Christ has provided leaders in the church to exercise this power. Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1-3
5. The power of the Church resides primarily in the governing body of the local church. Acts 15:6; Hebrews 13:17
  - a. Presbyterianism honors the autonomy of the local church.

b. Presbyterianism stresses the importance of being connected with other churches for doctrinal, judicial, and administrative purposes (in our case, the churches of the PCA).

6. Professor John Frame of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Fl. in his book *Evangelical Reunion* makes some comments which are helpful in understanding why Presbyterians believe this form of church government is Biblical. He says:

I am a Presbyterian. Most likely, I believe, the church was originally organized in a way analogous to the organization of Israel (Exodus 18:17-26), with leaders over tens, hundreds, thousands, and so on. The pattern applied also to Israel's religious life, organized according to families and synagogues, with the Sanhedrin as the highest court. The early Christians naturally adopted this model with little change. The "tens" would be the house churches: essentially single families with, perhaps, others worshipping with them. The "thousands" would be the city churches, the church of Jerusalem, the church of Philippi, and so on whose leaders Paul addresses as a body in Philippians 1:1. The highest level would be the whole church; and indeed at one point in Acts a body is convened that has power over the whole church to deal with a matter that could not be resolved at the local level (Acts 15). As such, the government of the church is composed of various levels of courts, the broader ones dealing with issues that cannot be resolved by the narrower ones.

#### BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PRESBYTERIAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Can you think of examples of how attitudes toward authority figures have changed since you were growing up?

When you were growing up, what authority figure was toughest for you to respect? Why?

Consider the Biblical principles of church government and authority. Read the following:

#### **PRINCIPLE # 1: THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH**

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He is the true source of all the church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function and motive of the body, both individually and corporately.

He is also the head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the first-born among the dead, so that He Himself might come to have supremacy, Colossians 1:18.

#### **PRINCIPLE # 2: WHERE DOES THE CHURCH RECEIVE ITS GUIDANCE?**

The church is only has true to God as it is conformed to the word of God. The word alone is the sufficient standard for the church's faith and life.

*You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work, 2Tim. 3:14-17.*

**PRINCIPLE #3: WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE CHURCH'S POWER?**

The Holy Spirit is the source of the Church's power. The Holy Spirit's role is to indwell and control believers in order to conform them to the character of Christ.

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest parts of the earth, Acts 1:8.

**PRINCIPLE #4: HOW IS THE CHURCH LED?**

God leads the church by gifted, spiritual, and appointed men. He directs the church by giving certain men specific gifts ". . . apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11-13). The following are verses that show that appointed men serving as elders is the divinely inspired method of receiving and dispensing of direction and nurture in the church.

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love, Eph. 4:11-16.*

The Book of Church order says that elders lead 'severally and jointly', BCO 8-3. This means that elders lead the church together, as a group, as a plurality.

*For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, Titus 1:5.*

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood, Acts 20:28.*

As churches were established in the faith, and when more than one man became qualified, elders were appointed to continue the pastor-teaching ministry in each local church. To the elders was given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight of that particular church body, and the shepherding of its members.

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching, 1Tim. 5:17.*

Some elders would give more time to the spiritual leadership than others and would be called to fill more demanding responsibilities. They therefore would be worthy of "double honor" (usually understood as monetary compensation or honorarium).

*And 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. But select from among you brethren, seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, who we may put in charge of this task' (Acts 6:2-3).*

As necessary, elders served the physical needs of the church at the time when there were no deacons as a way to free up the Apostles to pray and minister the word. As 1Timothy 3: 8-13 says,

... deacons were appointed later to serve the church, particularly in undertaking those areas of need that would otherwise prohibit the elders from performing their Biblical responsibilities.

These leaders, along with all members of each local body form a unique organism -- a visible functioning expression of the universal church. Skyview Presbyterian Church recognizes this Biblical pattern for the plurality of godly leadership, under the oversight and watch care of elders and the supportive leadership of deacons.

# Skyview Presbyterian Church

Practice

## SKYVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

*Skyview Presbyterian Church exists to impact South Metro Denver by an intentional celebration and communication of the Reformed faith, which represents the multifaceted gospel of Jesus Christ, so that He, through it, may reveal his will, cherish and direct everyone and everything that is his in the family, church, community and world.*

**Short Slogan:** *Skyview: Bringing the Life-Giving Reformed Faith to South Metro Denver, the West and the World*

We seek to accomplish this: through *Worship, Teaching, Fellowship, and Reaching*  
But what does this mean? How do we fulfill our purpose and our mission in life?

*Read Acts 2:41-47 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

1. How does a person become a Christian?
2. What were the things the early Christians did together?
3. What were the results of their meeting together?
4. How would you characterize their relationships with one another?

**What is Skyview's Vision?** *Skyview Presbyterian Church exists to impact South Metro Denver by an intentional celebration and communication of the Reformed faith, which represents the multifaceted gospel of Jesus Christ, so that He, through it, may reveal his will, cherish and direct everyone and everything that is his in the family, church, community and world.*

This is very elementary; but this is the sum total of all what are doing and all we are. We don't exist for ourselves, primarily. We exist for God, for his glory, for his name, for his kingdom ... but any rightful pursuit of God's glory, which is an upward focus must also include an inward and outward focus.

That glorifying God is worked out by ministering to others, those who are within the body of Christ and those who are outside the body of Christ, hence the two go together glorifying God and touching people with the life-giving reformed faith.

This is a general, yet vital starting point.

What is Skyview's Mission? How does one accomplish this vision? The next is MISSION. What is our mission? How to expect to see our vision realized? This takes the form of 4 expressions: Worship, Teaching, Fellowship, and Reaching.

## 1. Worship

Skyview Presbyterian Church is a Reformed church, which means that public worship will have a uniquely Reformed expression. In this respect, Skyview's public worship will have 3 traits. Its 'Voice' is simple; its 'Goal' is transcendence and its 'Order' reenacts the gospel.

Skyview "voices" or expresses worship with simplicity and poise. Reformed worship is dignified in its presentation. It follows a historic liturgy, which includes congregational singings, scripture reading, prayers of all kinds and preaching. Skyview's public worship does not rely on showy forms and representation.

**Its goal is 'Transcendence,'** that is, it seeks to catch a glimpse of the greatness of the Lord, which has come to us in the incarnation. Hebrews 12:18ff tells us where we are in public worship; we are in the presence of God. Worship, which is transcendent, will bring God's people face to face with God. In worship, we are truly amazed by God's grace.

**Its 'Order' reenacts the gospel.** The prophet Isaiah's experience is one place where we discover this worship/gospel pattern. Isaiah 6: 1-9 follows the pattern of **Praise, Renewal** and **Commitment**, which moves the congregation from one element to another in our public worship service

Isaiah observed God sitting on the throne and angels flying around the throne and singing. The angels were praising God and they were echoing back to God what they saw, the holiness of God. This caused Isaiah to break down as he realized the sinfulness of his own heart and life. Thus, he became aware of his profound need for renewal and transformation. Lastly, it was only after God had forgiven and restored Isaiah, that Isaiah became useful to God.

This too is our pattern. We come into the presence of God, to give him praise and adoration. But then we are taken to the next phase, Renewal. Here we are reminded of our need for forgiveness and righteousness, which we, in ourselves, do not possess or earn. But by confession of sin, repentance and trust in Christ's promises, he declares our absolution, "*See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.*" Then it is out of that absolution, that we are commissioned to serve the Lord with gladness of heart and grateful humility.

We are committed to growing in our praise to God. We desire to come with joy, freedom, boldness, and awe into his presence. We believe that our worship is a performance not by a few leaders, but by the whole worshipping community, and that God is present in our worship, receiving our love and adoration. We believe that the diversity of the body should be expressed in a richness and variety of music. We believe that our worship should be evangelistic in the sense that unbelievers who are present

ought to be able to observe us and say, "God is really among you" as they are drawn to worship him. (1Cor. 14:25) And while we desire to worship God for all his perfections and accomplishments, we believe we are called to especially celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

## **2. Teaching**

We are committed to helping one another grow in conformity to Christ. The goal of our instruction "is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). In other words, we do not learn for the purpose of accumulating knowledge but rather to become more like our Lord. Through sermons, Sunday school, seminars and small groups we will grow together in: comprehension of Biblical doctrine; competency in the application of Biblical principles to life; and most importantly, conformity to the very character of Christ.

We are committed to growing as a loving, caring, encouraging community. We will share in one another's needs, growth and joy. We will serve one another with gifts the Holy Spirit has given each of us. And we will support one another in prayer, acceptance and affirmation. An important aspect of our personal growth is the use of small groups to foster fellowship, openness, mutual encouragement and accountability. We desire to see all of our church life taking place in an increasing unity of spirit and purpose. So that we might be bound together in love, we desire to know each other better and to grow in our openness, honesty and service to one another. We do not see fellowship as an end in itself but rather as a means to the end of becoming more like Christ.

## **3. Fellowship**

As you recall our discussion of Acts 2, remember how involved those early Christians were with each other. Our culture and society are far different from those times but we still are called as Christians to help one another. Being a Christian means putting others first. Philippians 2 says:

*Phil. 2:1-4 If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

The Bible is full of commands directing us to do things for "one another." Consider this partial list. Which are ones that really speak to your heart?

### One Another list:

love one another	John 15:12
don't pass judgment on one another	Romans 14:1
be members of one another	Romans 12:5
be devoted to one another	Romans 12:10
honor one another	Romans 12:10
live in harmony with one another	Romans 12:16
build up one another	Romans 14:19
be like minded toward one another	Romans 15:5
accept one another	Romans 15:7
care for one another	1 Corinthians 12:25
serve one another in love	Galatians 5:13
don't spitefully hurt one another	Galatians 5:15
don't provoke envy in one another	Galatians 5:26
bear one another's burdens	Galatians 6:2
be kind to one another	Ephesians 4:32
forgive one another	Ephesians 4:32
submit to one another	Ephesians 5:21
don't lie to one another	Colossians 3:9
bear with one another	Colossians 3:13
abound in love toward one another	1 Thessalonians 3:12
comfort one another	1 Thessalonians 4:18
don't hate one another	Titus 3:3
encourage one another	Hebrews 3: 13
stir up one another to love and good deeds	Hebrews 10:24
don't slander one another	James 4:11
don't bear grudges against one another	James 5:9
confess your sins to one another	James 5:16
pray for one another	James 5:16
greet one another	1 Peter 5:14
have fellowship with one another	1 John 1:7

It is difficult on a Sunday morning to begin to fulfill these Biblical commands. Some we can, like greeting one another and accepting one another, but generally speaking to act out fully our Christianity with one another we have to get to know each other on a much deeper level than Sunday morning worship allows.

That is where small groups and other midweek functions come in! We encourage you to join these groups and events not only to receive friendship but also to provide it. God expects his people to be imitators of his son, who came not to be served to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma, Ephesians 5:1-2.*

#### **4. Reaching**

We desire to proclaim the good news of God's love in Christ through deeds of love and kindness in the name of Jesus. We believe this not only involves active ministry to the needy and helpless in our congregation and community, but also taking a stance against evils in our society that perpetuate injustice and sin against such victims as the unborn, the elderly, and the disadvantaged. We also desire to demonstrate our commitment to the global work of missions by our giving as a church as well as by sending out people from our congregation to minister in other parts of the country and world.

We further believe our primary task in the world today is to call all people to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, to call them to worship the true and living God. Evangelism is not one of many activities of the church but rather, in that it is the proclamation of the good news, it is to pervade all that we do.

To this end, we want all of our members equipped to share their faith in Christ. Foundational to our proclamation of God's love in Christ is the affirmation of that message in our love for one another (John 13:34-35). We are committed to being hospitable as a church and as individuals because God has welcomed us into his family, home and heart.

Furthermore, because we desire to join Paul in becoming all things to all men in order that we might win some (1Cor. 9:22), we will attempt to reach out in our community in a variety of ways, using whatever means we believe are consistent with God's word and will effectively communicate the gospel message to unbelievers. Although we will no doubt grow partially by means of transfer growth, our primary desire is to reach the unchurched with the message of salvation.

SKYVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
THE MEANING OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

**I. The Importance of Membership**

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common ...day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread together from house to house; they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. (Act 2:44,46)

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified themselves to a particular local body. (Romans 16:1; 1Cor. 1:2; 2Cor. 8:1; Phil. 1:1; Acts 11:26)

Church membership indicates the desire to commit yourself to a local body of believers. The New Testament assumes that Christians will make this kind of commitment.

The Bible teaches that we are to be in submission to one another and to the elders of the church. This instruction is always given to us within the context of the local church.

There are many practical benefits, which flow out of church membership (a greater involvement in the lives of one another, a greater sense of unity as the church works towards its goals, a greater sense of identification with the church, etc.).

In order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ, as defined in the New Testament and practiced in the early churches, Skyview Presbyterian Church recognizes the need for formal membership.

**II. The Criteria for Membership**

*To the Church of God at Corinth, those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, 1Cor. 1:2.*

Skyview membership shall be open to anyone who has personally received Jesus Christ as Savior, who is committed to the Lordship of Christ, and who desires to be committed to the people and ministry of Skyview.

### III. Church Membership Questions

The following vows are made when you come into membership. The ones below are those questions that paraphrase the meaning in more understandable language, BCO 57-5.

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save [except] in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

Below is a paraphrase of the vows above. This paraphrase was approved by our Session to use with children, who become communicant members of Skyview.

1. Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word and that in it we learn the only way to get to heaven?
2. Do you believe that you have sinned and cannot please God by trying to do or be good?
3. Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead?
4. Do you believe that God forgives your sins only because of what Jesus has done for you?
5. Do you believe that only through trusting Jesus can you know God's love and live with him forever?
6. Is Jesus your master, your Lord, and will you try to obey him in everything and to oppose everything sinful?
7. Do you promise to attend this church, to pray for it, to love its people, to use your abilities to serve in the church, and make gifts and offerings to help in its work?
8. Will you obey the elders and pray for them, since God has provided them for you and commanded them to care for you?

## IV. Responsibilities of Membership

Our goal at Skyview is to expect neither more nor less from church members than what our Lord requires of all who would follow Him. Needless to say, this is always easier said than done! We know our programs will change through the years, but there are certain principles that we believe remain constant. These principles are included in our last three membership questions and indicate what it means to be a D.I.S.C.I.P.L.E. of Christ.

D	Devotion
I	Intercession
S	Submission
C	Commitment
I	Involvement
P	Peace
L	Liberality
E	Evangelism

### A. **DEVOTION** to Christ (you commit to the purity of the church)

#### 1. Purity in the Way You Live

- a. What is meant: It is expected of every church member, no matter the depth of his or her spiritual maturity, that he or she is seeking to live a life of obedience to God's Word.
- b. Factors which prompt this purity:
  - i. Bible Study
  - ii. Prayer
  - iii. Fellowship
  - iv. Private and Public Worship

#### 2. Purity in What You Believe

- a. In order to join, one must adhere to the essentials of the Christian faith as reflected in the membership questions.
- b. In order to join, one does not have to adhere to the distinctives of Presbyterian theology.

### B. **INTERCESSION** (you promise to support this church with your prayers)

1. Prayer is a means of maintaining your relationship to God.
2. We also believe that prayer is the means by which God causes His church to mature and grow. Thus, it is important to pray for other believers and especially for the leaders of the church, that God would give all of us the grace and wisdom we need to be followers of Christ.
3. Prayer consists of several different elements, and one helpful way to keep your prayers "in balance" is to remember A.C.T.S. Prayer should include:
  - a. Adoration of God for who He is.
  - b. Confession of our sin.
  - c. Thanksgiving for what God has done for others and us.
  - d. Supplication (or requests) for your own needs and the needs of others.

**C. SUBMISSION** (you give to the elders of the church your submission)

1. As Christians we are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21). Practically speaking, this means we are to respect one another and the wisdom and guidance that each has to contribute. Paul says we do this "out of reverence for Christ."
  - a. God has given gifts to every member of the church, not just the officers, Romans 12: 3-5.
  - b. God has given access to every believer to perform "priestly" ministry one to another, not just the officers, 1Peter 2:9.
  - c. God's ministry to one another is not inferior because it does not performed by an officer, 1Corinthians 12: 22-23.
  - d. Therefore, by submitting to one another, you are receiving the ministry of Christ, Acts 18: 24-26.
2. As an extension of this mutual submission, we are called upon to submit to the authority of the God-ordained rulers in the local church, the elders. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."
  - a. Elders are called upon to be overseers and shepherds of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3). They are to be *eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to them, but being examples to the flock*, (1Peter 5:3).
  - b. Elders are responsible to God and have "to give an account" for the exercise of their spiritual leadership.
  - c. This leadership primarily involves prayer, teaching, preaching, guarding and other aspects of pastoral oversight. They are also responsible to God for the doctrinal and personal purity of the Church.
    - i. In connection with this, church discipline must sometimes be exercised in order to restore those who are either persisting in basic doctrinal error or willful sin.
    - ii. Such discipline must always have the Word of God as its final authority.
    - iii. The elders have, in turn, taken vows to submit to the Presbytery (which consists of the pastors and elders of other churches in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana). This is the Presbyterian way of insuring that elders are also accountable for their actions and that they will exercise their God-given authority in the way that God intended.
    - iv. The purpose of church discipline is not condemnation, but restoration. It is to be exercised in love and humility.

**D. COMMITMENT** (you support the church with your attendance)

1. Coming together to worship God and learning from His word is an essential part of the life of the church. Hebrews 10:25 tells us "*not to give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another . . .*"
  - a. Attendance at worship is important not only for your own needs and interests, but also for those of others. We need to be "encouraging one another" in our worship, and this is best done when God's people regularly and consistently worship together.
  - b. We would encourage each member to attend:
    - i. Sunday morning worship
    - ii. A Sunday School class

- iii. A small group meeting as they become available
- 2. Some important qualifications in the area of commitment:
  - a. It doesn't mean being involved in every activity the church sponsors.
  - b. It doesn't mean neglecting your home.
  - c. It doesn't mean failing to recognize special and unique situations and responsibilities.

**E. INVOLVEMENT** (you support this church with your talents)

1. The work of the church is not something that the leaders of the church do while others merely observe, but it is to be carried out by the whole body of believers.
2. In order for this to take place, pastors and teachers must prepare, or equip God's people for works of service (Ephesians 4:12). This is primarily done through teaching, preaching and discipleship.
3. The Bible teaches that all Christians are gifted for service in the church (and some outside of the church). It is the responsibility of each Christian to use these "spiritual gifts" to serve others (1Peter 4:10).
4. Thus, involvement in the life and ministry of the church is something we expect from each other. We all are needed and needy. Discovery of and use of your spiritual gift/s is an expectation of membership.

**F. PEACE** (you will seek the peace of the church)

1. Speaking badly of others is not to be tolerated in the church (Col. 3:8). Speaking badly of others can be defined as "using words, tonal patterns or facial expressions to put someone else in a bad light. It is damaging someone else's reputation with information that doesn't need to be shared. It is encouraging or spreading discontent or discord among others."
2. Scriptural guidelines, which direct towards peace within a church:
  - a. Go directly to those with whom you have a problem. (Matthew 18:15)
  - b. Go directly to those who have a problem with you. (Matthew 5:23-24)
  - c. Always be positive in speech and remain silent rather than negative. (Proverbs 15:30; 17:9)
3. God's attitude toward those who speak badly of others:
  - a. Proverbs 6:19 *He who sows discord among the brethren is an abomination to the Lord.*
  - b. James 1:26 *If anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.*
4. Ways to stop someone else from speaking badly of others:
  - a. Lovingly ask, "Do you feel I am responsible to know about this? I would rather not hear about this unless I am directly involved."
  - b. Display a disapproving countenance: *As the north wind drives holds back the rain, so an angry glance holds back slander,* (Proverbs 25:23 New English Bible).
5. A commitment to one another: "In obedience to the Word of God, I commit myself to the goal of giving only good reports of others. When this is not possible, I promise to remain silent or to privately go to the person and explain the offense that would hinder me from giving a good report. I promise to approach an offender in a spirit of genuine love, having first examined and corrected my own attitudes and actions. Only if I am unable to restore an offender will I share the problem with others according to the principles of

Scripture. When I violate this goal, I promise to ask forgiveness of God and of those against whom I have sinned."

**G. LIBERALITY** (you promise to support the church with your financial gifts)

1. Why it is important to give to the church:
  - a. The church is operated solely on the gifts of God's people. It is important that we recognize our responsibility to God and to each other to give as we are able so that the work of the church can continue to grow.
  - b. The church gives back directly to you in terms of its ministry.
  - c. The church also has committed itself to give for you through giving to other mission and church related ministries.
2. Some Scriptural guidelines for giving:
  - a. The 10% tithe remains the initial starting point for giving. This percent is the great equalizer.
  - b. 2Cor. 8:3-9: - our attitude in giving:
    - i. We should give sacrificially - "they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability."
    - ii. We should give willingly - "they gave of their own accord."
    - iii. We should give eagerly - "they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service."
    - iv. We should give of ourselves - "they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to us ..."
    - v. We should give out of gratitude to Christ - "for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."
  - c. 1 Cor. 16:2 - we should give regularly.

**H. EVANGELISM** (you will seek the growth of the church)

1. Different ways we are involved in the outreach of the church.
  - a. Prayer for the lost and for the effective outreach of the church.
  - b. By using our spiritual gifts. As each member of the church uses his spiritual gift, he is either contributing directly or indirectly to the growth of the church. For example, in Acts 6, the seven freed up the elders from waiting on tables in order that they could pray and minister God's Word. The result was that many were added to the church.
  - c. By inviting others to church so that they might hear the Gospel proclaimed and see the reality of Jesus in our midst.
  - d. By welcoming those who visit our church.
  - e. By offering hospitality to new people and one another.
  - f. By being directly involved ourselves in sharing with others what Christ has done for us and is able to do for them.
2. We believe it is important for everyone to know how to share the Gospel (1Peter 3:15), and we will provide opportunities for training.
  - a. Using personal testimony
  - b. Giving away books, booklets, CDs and other media
  - c. Connecting with friends within the church and wider church
  - d. Personal invitation to read and study the bible
  - e. Befriending and inviting to observe your Christian Life and to answer questions.



## APPENDIX A

### Evangelicalism

#### Statement of Faith: What do all Christians believe?

The following paragraphs provide a short summary of the key beliefs Christians hold. These beliefs which we share in common with other Protestant Evangelical Churches, are summarized below. A commitment to the Bible as God's inerrant word and authority for life and faith is what unites evangelical churches and separates them from liberal churches and from the Roman Catholic faith.

#### I. The Bible

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, composed of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe that the Bible is the written Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible is our infallible and divine authority in all matters of faith and life. We believe that Scripture in its entirety originated with God, and reflects the backgrounds, styles and vocabularies of the human authors, (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:19-21).

#### II. God

We believe that there is one true God, eternally existing in three persons -- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit -- each of Whom possesses equally all the attributes of Deity and characteristic personality. These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. In the beginning God created out of nothing the world and all the things therein, thus manifesting the glory of His power, wisdom and goodness. By His sovereign power He continues to sustain His creation, and by His providence He orders the affairs of men and nations according to His own wise, eternal plan. (Romans 11:33-36; Romans 8:28; Job 38:4-11)

#### III. Salvation

The central purpose of God's revelation in Scripture is to call men into fellowship with Himself. Originally created to have fellowship with God, man chose to go his own independent way, and was thus alienated from God and suffered the corruption of his nature, rendering him unable to please God. The fall took place at the beginning of human history, and every person since has inherited these consequences and are thus in need of the saving grace of God. The salvation of men is, then, wholly a work of God's free grace, not the result, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness, and is appropriated by faith alone. God alone saves those whom He draws to Jesus by His Holy Spirit. He convinces them of their sin and enlightens them so that they repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ. When God has begun a saving work in the heart of any man he gives assurance in His word that He will continue to perform it until the day of its full consummation. (Romans 5:12-14; John 6: 44, 65; Romans 8:16; Philippians 1:6)

#### IV. Jesus Christ

The saving object of faith is Jesus Christ, the eternal second Person of the Trinity who was united forever with a true human nature by a miraculous conception and virgin birth. He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father and voluntarily atoned for the

sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone. He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died. He ascended bodily into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, where He, the only Mediator between God and man, continually makes intercession for His own. We believe that Jesus Christ shall return personally, visibly, and bodily to judge all mankind and to receive His people unto Himself. He has instituted two sacraments -- baptism and the Lord's supper -- to bear witness through visible symbols to His saving work. (1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:1, 14; Acts 7:55-56; 1 John 2:1)

#### V. The Holy Spirit

The essential accompaniment of a genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ is a life of holiness and obedience, wrought in the heart of the sinner by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. He was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to apply to men the saving work of Christ. He enlightens the minds of sinners, awakens in them a recognition of their need of a Savior, regenerates them, and at the point of salvation permanently indwells every believer to become the source of assurance, strength, wisdom and guidance. His power and control are appropriated by faith, enabling the believer to live a life of Christlike character and to bear fruit to the glory of the Father. (Titus 3: 3-8; John 6:63; John 14:16-18; Acts 2:4)

#### VI. Human Destiny

The consummation of God's saving work embraces the whole man -- body and soul. For all men there is a life to come, a resurrection of the body, and a future judgment. At physical death, the believer enters into eternal conscious fellowship with the Lord; and the nonbeliever into eternal conscious separation from the Lord; bodies of all dead shall be raised -- some to a resurrection of glory, some to a resurrection of condemnation. There are two aspects of the righteous judgment of God: the judgment of believers reveals the quality of works done in the body for the purposes of bestowing rewards, there being no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; the judgment of unbelievers reveals the depth of sin and the justice of God in sending men to perpetuate in their eternal rejection of God. (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 3: 10-15)

#### VII. The Church

The corollary of union with Jesus Christ is that all believers became members of one another. There is one true Universal Church, which is composed of all people everywhere, living and dead, who have trusted in Christ alone for salvation, without regard to organizational affiliation. God commands us to assemble together for the purposes of worship, edification, mutual encouragement, and wherever God's people meet in obedience to his command there is a local expression of the Church. It is the responsibility of each member to keep the unity of the Spirit for the up-building of the Body, and to work with other members of the fellowship to show Christian concern for the needs of people everywhere, and to fulfill our Lord's final command to His Church - - to spread the Good News of redemption throughout the world. (1 Corinthian 12: 12-20; Ephesians 2: 17-22)

This brief statement of what Christians believe should be an encouragement to you as well as motivation to understand more fully the tenets of your faith. Furthermore, if you believe what you have read in this lesson there are significant consequences for

how you live your life. The reality of absolute truth, a coming day of judgment, the blessing of eternal life with God in heaven, or the reality of eternal separation from God in hell should be strong motivation in your life to know God and to walk with Him diligently every day which remains.

## APPENDIX B

### MORE ABOUT PEACE IN THE CHURCH

During the course we reviewed the D.I.S.C.I.P.L.E. principles. One of those principles, "P", stressed the importance of seeking Peace in the church. The Scriptural guidelines which we said applied to this principle were:

1. Go directly to those with whom you have a problem. Matthew 18:15-17: *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*
2. Go directly to those who have a problem with you. Matthew 5:23-24: *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift."*
3. Always be positive in speech and remain silent rather than negative. Proverbs 15:30: *"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones."* 17:9: *"He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."*

Today we want to go a bit further into this principle because "peace" is a central concept of Scripture. We serve the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Paul urges "to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). And, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). It is interesting to note that whenever peace is disrupted by disagreements between believers or by the sin of a believer, Scripture is very procedurally oriented so that harmony may be quickly restored. (Matt. 18:15-17; 5:23-24; Gal. 6:1-2)

We take this issue seriously at Skyview. Failure to be reconciled could be a matter of church discipline taken up by the Session of the church in accordance with the discipline procedures of our denomination (as set forth in the PCA Book of Church Order). It is expected that members will be able to resolve most differences without the need to enter into formal reconciliation counseling, mediation, or Session action. That is best done by following the three Scriptural guidelines above.

When that cannot be done, members (and non members if they agree to be bound by the rules of Biblical Reconciliation) are requested to sign a "Commitment To Be Reconciled", and formal mediation begun. A copy of this commitment is as follows:

This book will help you to learn to become a Peacemaker by applying the following basic principles:

**The Four G's** that shapes Biblical Conflict Resolution: 1Pet. 2:12 *Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Glorify God;  
Get the log out of your own eye;  
Go and show your brother his fault;  
Go and be reconciled

**Three Opportunities in Conflict:** 1Cor. 10:31-11:1 *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*

Matt. 25:21 *His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'*

Glorify God  
Serve others  
Grow to be like Christ

**Seven A's of Confession:** Prov. 28:13 *He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*

Matt. 7:3-5 *And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

Address everyone involved  
Avoid "if", "but" and "maybe"  
Admit specifically  
Acknowledge the hurt  
Accept the consequences  
Alter your behavior  
Ask for forgiveness.

**Five Steps for Resolving Conflict** (Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 6:23-24; 18:15-20)

Overlook minor offenses  
Talk in private  
Take one or two others along  
Tell it to the church  
Treat him as an unbeliever

**Four Promises of Forgiveness:** 1Cor. 13:5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered...

Eph. 4:32 *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

I will not think about this incident.

I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.

I will not talk to others about this incident.

I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our relationship

from: The Peacemaker by Ken Sande (Baker Book House).

APPENDIX C  
The History of Presbyterianism in America