



A Congregational Primer:
Central Presbyterian Church,
Presbyterianism & Evangelicalism

Approved by the Session of
Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown, PA
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Introduction

During times of controversy a considerable amount of information, and at times misinformation, is disseminated in the church. The purpose of this “Primer” is to provide information about Central Presbyterian Church, Presbyterianism, Evangelicalism and other Presbyterian denominations to inform the congregation as well as to clear up any misunderstandings that may exist.

This document provides information about our congregation’s beliefs, a brief history of the Presbyterian Church and a description of Presbyterian distinctives. Also included is a definition of evangelicalism, a brief history of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the newly formed Evangelical Covenant Order.

The information provided does not include all that can be said about the topics covered, it is provided as a “primer” for the congregation. It is expected that the information provided will help answer questions that members of the congregation may have about these topics and provide direction for further inquiry if needed.

Who Central Presbyterian Church Is and What It Believes

Following are CPC's mission and vision statements, core values and confession which explain who we are, what we are called to do and where Christ is leading us. All decisions in the life of the church are considered through these lenses.

Our Mission

Central Presbyterian Church's mission is to:

- **Know God,**
- **Grow in Christ,**
- **Serve and Love the world in His name,**

And wherever we **go**, make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our Vision

Central Presbyterian Church is a body of believers united and centered in Jesus Christ.

- Through worship, prayer, and Scripture, we seek to be salt and light to our local community and wherever in the world we are called to His mission and service.
- We serve and support the world God loves, and strive to welcome and encourage seekers to encounter and know the living God in a friendly, accepting, and loving environment.
- We who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior hold ourselves and each other accountable to develop a broader, deeper, and intimate relationship with God.
- By God's grace and for His glory, we strive to be good and faithful stewards of our time, talents, and treasure while doing His Kingdom work here on earth.
- We recognize and value the unique gifts of each member of our family of believers, and we seek to blend and multiply their effectiveness in service to the Church throughout the world.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we look forward to a future of challenges and boundless opportunities as we continue our journey of faith.

Our Core Values

We at Central Presbyterian Church, living from Christ as the center of our lives, commit ourselves to the following core values:

Christ Centered - We live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

- *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.* 11
Corinthians 5:14-15
- *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* Proverbs 3:5-6

Biblically Based - We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the foundation for all of life.

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* II Timothy 3:16-17
- *I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.* Psalm 119:15-16

Worship Focused - We glorify God by living all of life as an act of worship.

- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* Romans 12:1
- *I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.* Psalm 86:12

Missionally Committed - We love the world by spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ as we reach out to those in need.

- *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28:18-20
- *Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* Matthew 22:37-40
- *The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* Genesis 12:1-3

Relationally Connected - We are devoted to one another and honor one another above ourselves.

- *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* John 15:12
- *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* Philippians 2:1-4
- *How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!* Psalm 133:1

Source: CPC website (<http://www.cpcdowningtown.org/who.shtml>)

Our Confession

Central Presbyterian Church of Downingtown Pennsylvania joins faithful believers throughout the Church in confessing:

- That Jesus Christ alone is Lord of all and the way of salvation (BOC: 5.077; 6.043; 7.170).
- That Holy Scripture is the triune God's revealed Word, the Church's only infallible rule of faith and life (BOC: 3.19; 5.001-.003; 6.001-.010, .052, .184; 7.113).
- That God's people are called to holiness in all aspects of life. This includes, but is not limited to, honoring the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, which was instituted and blessed by God as the only relationship within which sexual activity is appropriate (BOC: 4.087-4.091; 5.245-.251; 6.131-6.139; 7.247-.249; 7.070; 9.47).

We encourage all Presbyterians who share these historic Christian convictions to renew their individual commitments to the confessional statements in *The Book of Confessions* (BOC) and particularly the confessions stated above.

Approved by the Session of Central Presbyterian Church of Downingtown Pennsylvania
on the 11th day of December, 2001

What is Presbyterianism?

It is important to understand the context in which CPC has been called to serve the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ. CPC's beliefs (doctrine) are from the Reformed Christian tradition and our system of governance (polity) is Presbyterian. The following account of Presbyterian history is from the PCUSA website.

Presbyterian Church History

The earliest Christian church consisted of Jews in the first century who had known Jesus and heard his teachings. It gradually grew and spread from the Middle East to other parts of the world, though not without controversy and hardship among its supporters.

During the fourth century, after more than 300 years of persecution under various Roman emperors, the church became established as a political as well as a spiritual power under the Emperor Constantine. Theological and political disagreements, however, served to widen the rift between members of the eastern (Greek-speaking) and western (Latin-speaking) branches of the church. Eventually the western portions of Europe came under the religious and political authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Eastern Europe and parts of Asia came under the authority of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The invention of the printing press in Germany around 1440 made it possible for common people to have access to printed materials including the Bible. This, in turn, enabled many to discover religious thinkers who had begun to question the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. One such figure, Martin Luther, a German priest and professor, started the movement known as the Protestant Reformation when he posted a list of 95 grievances against the Roman Catholic Church on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517. Some 20 years later, a French/Swiss theologian, John Calvin, further refined the reformers' new way of thinking about the nature of God and God's relationship with humanity in what came to be known as Reformed theology. John Knox, a Scotsman who studied with Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland, took Calvin's teachings back to Scotland. Other Reformed communities developed in England, Holland and France. The Presbyterian church traces its ancestry back primarily to Scotland and England.

Presbyterians have featured prominently in United States history. The Rev. Francis Makemie, who arrived in the United States from Ireland in 1683, helped to organize the first American Presbytery at Philadelphia in 1706. In 1726, the Rev. William Tennent founded a ministerial "log college" in Pennsylvania. Twenty years later, the College of New Jersey (now known as Princeton University) was established. Other Presbyterian ministers, such as the Rev. Jonathan Edwards and the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, were driving forces in the so-called "Great Awakening," a revivalist movement in the early 18th century. One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Rev. John Witherspoon, was a Presbyterian minister and the president of Princeton University from 1768-1793.

Presbyterian denominations in the United States have split and parts have reunited several times. Currently the largest Presbyterian denomination is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which has its national offices in Louisville, Ky. It was formed in 1983 as a result of reunion between the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS), the so-called "southern branch," and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA), the so-called "northern branch." Other Presbyterian churches in the United States include the Presbyterian Church in America, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Source: PCUSA General Assembly Mission Council (<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/101/history/>)

To expand on the PCUSA account of Presbyterian history, following is information from Wikipedia that describes Presbyterian roots, characteristics, doctrine, governance and history in the United States.

What is Presbyterianism?

Presbyterianism refers to a number of Christian churches adhering to the Calvinist theological tradition within Protestantism, which are organized according to a characteristic Presbyterian polity. Presbyterian theology typically emphasizes the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Scriptures, and the necessity of grace through faith in Christ. Presbyterianism originated primarily in Scotland. Scotland ensured Presbyterian "church government" in the Acts of Union in 1707 which created Great Britain. In fact, most Presbyterians found in England can trace a Scottish connection, and the Presbyterian denomination was also taken to North America mostly by Scots and Scots-Irish immigrants. The Presbyterian denominations in Scotland hold to the theology of Calvin and his immediate successors, although there is a range of theological views within contemporary Presbyterianism.

Modern Presbyterianism traces its institutional roots back to the Scottish Reformation. Local congregations are governed by Sessions made up of representatives of the congregation, a conciliar approach which is found at other levels of decision-making (Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly). Theoretically, there are no bishops in Presbyterianism; however, some groups in Eastern Europe, and in ecumenical groups, do have bishops. The office of elder is another distinctive mark of Presbyterianism: these are specially ordained non-clergy who take part in local pastoral care and decision-making at all levels. The office of deacon is geared toward the care of members, their families, and the surrounding community. In some congregations active elders and deacons serve a three-year term and then rotate off for at least a year. The offices of pastor, elder, and deacon all commence with ordination; once a person is ordained, he holds that title for the rest of his life. An individual may serve as both an elder and a deacon.

The roots of Presbyterianism lie in the European Reformation of the 16th century, with the example of John Calvin's Geneva being particularly influential. Most Reformed churches who trace their history back to Scotland are either Presbyterian or Congregationalist in government. In the twentieth century, some Presbyterians played an important role in the Ecumenical Movement, including the World Council of Churches. Many Presbyterian denominations have found ways of working together with other Reformed denominations and Christians of other traditions, especially in the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Some Presbyterian churches have entered into unions with other churches, such as Congregationalists, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Methodists.

Presbyterian denominations derive their name from the Greek word *presbýteros* (πρεσβύτερος), "elder." (Presbyterian church in Acts 14:23, 20:17, Titus 1:5). Presbyterianism was first described in detail by Martin Bucer of Strasbourg, who believed that the early Christian church implemented Presbyterian polity. The first modern implementation was by the Geneva church under the leadership of John Calvin in 1541

Characteristics

Presbyterians distinguish themselves from other denominations by doctrine, institutional organization (or "church order") and worship; often using a "Book of Order" to regulate common practice and order. The origins of the Presbyterian churches were in Calvinism, which is no longer emphasized in some contemporary branches. Many branches of Presbyterianism are remnants of previous splits from larger groups. Some of the splits have been due to doctrinal controversy, while some have been caused by disagreement concerning the degree to which those ordained to church office should be required to agree

with the Westminster Confession of Faith, which historically serves as an important confessional document - second only to the Bible, yet directing particularities in the standardization and translation of the Bible - in Presbyterian churches.

Presbyterians place great importance upon education and life-long learning. Continuous study of the scriptures, theological writings, and understanding and interpretation of church doctrine are embodied in several statements of faith and catechisms formally adopted by various branches of the church, often referred to as 'subordinate standards'. It is generally considered that the point of such learning is to enable one to put one's faith into practice; some Presbyterians generally exhibit their faith in action as well as words, by generosity, hospitality, and the constant pursuit of social justice and reform, as well as proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

Governance

Presbyterian government is by councils (known as *courts*) of elders. Teaching and ruling elders are ordained and convene in the lowest council known as a *session* or *consistory* responsible for the discipline, nurture, and mission of the local congregation. Teaching elders (pastors) have responsibility for teaching, worship, and performing sacraments. Pastors are called by individual congregations. A congregation issues a call for the pastor's service, but this call must be ratified by the local presbytery.

Ruling elders are usually laymen (and laywomen in some denominations) who are elected by the congregation and ordained to serve with the teaching elders, assuming responsibility for nurture and leadership of the congregation. Often, especially in larger congregations, the elders delegate the practicalities of buildings, finance, and temporal ministry to the needy in the congregation to a distinct group of officers (sometimes called deacons, who are ordained in some denominations). This group may variously be known as a 'Deacon Board', 'Board of Deacons' 'Diaconate', or 'Deacons' Court'. These are sometimes known as "presbyters" to the full congregation.

Above the sessions exist presbyteries, which have area responsibilities. These are composed of teaching elders and ruling elders from each of the constituent congregations. The presbytery sends representatives to a broader regional or national assembly, generally known as the General Assembly, although an intermediate level of a *synod* sometimes exists. This congregation / presbytery / synod / general assembly schema is based on the historical structure of the larger Presbyterian churches, such as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Doctrine

Presbyterianism is historically a confessional tradition. This has two implications. The obvious one is that confessional churches express their faith in the form of "confessions of faith," which have some level of authoritative status. However this is based on a more subtle point: In confessional churches, theology is not solely an individual matter. While individuals are encouraged to understand Scripture, and may challenge the current institutional understanding, theology is carried out by the community as whole. It is this community understanding of theology that is expressed in confessions. However, there has arisen a spectrum of approaches to "confessionalism". The manner of *subscription*, or the degree to which the official standards establish the actual doctrine of the church, turns out to be a practical matter. That is, the decisions rendered in ordination and in the courts of the church largely determine what the church means, representing the whole, by its adherence to the doctrinal standard.

Some Presbyterian traditions adopt only the Westminster Confession of Faith as the doctrinal standard to which teaching elders are required to subscribe, in contrast to the Larger and Shorter catechisms, which are approved for use in instruction. Many Presbyterian denominations, especially in North America, have adopted all of the Westminster Standards as their standard of doctrine which is subordinate to the Bible. These documents are Calvinistic in their doctrinal orientation, although some versions of the *Confession* and the catechisms are more overtly Calvinist than some other, later American revisions. The Presbyterian Church in Canada retains the Westminster Confession of Faith in its original form, while admitting the historical period in which it was written should be understood when it is read.

The Westminster Confession is 'The principal subordinate standard of the Church of Scotland' (Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland II), but 'with due regard to liberty of opinion in points which do not enter into the substance of the Faith' (V). This formulation represents many years of struggle over the extent to which the confession reflects the Word of God and the struggle of conscience of those who came to believe it did not fully do so (*e.g.*, William Robertson Smith). Some Presbyterian Churches, such as the Free Church of Scotland, have no such 'conscience clause'.

The Presbyterian Church USA has adopted the Book of Confessions, which reflects the inclusion of other Reformed confessions in addition to the *Westminster* documents. These other documents include ancient creedal statements (the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed), 16th century Reformed confessions (the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, all of which were written before Calvinism had developed as a particular strand of Reformed doctrine), and 20th century documents (The Theological Declaration of Barmen and the Confession of 1967).

United States

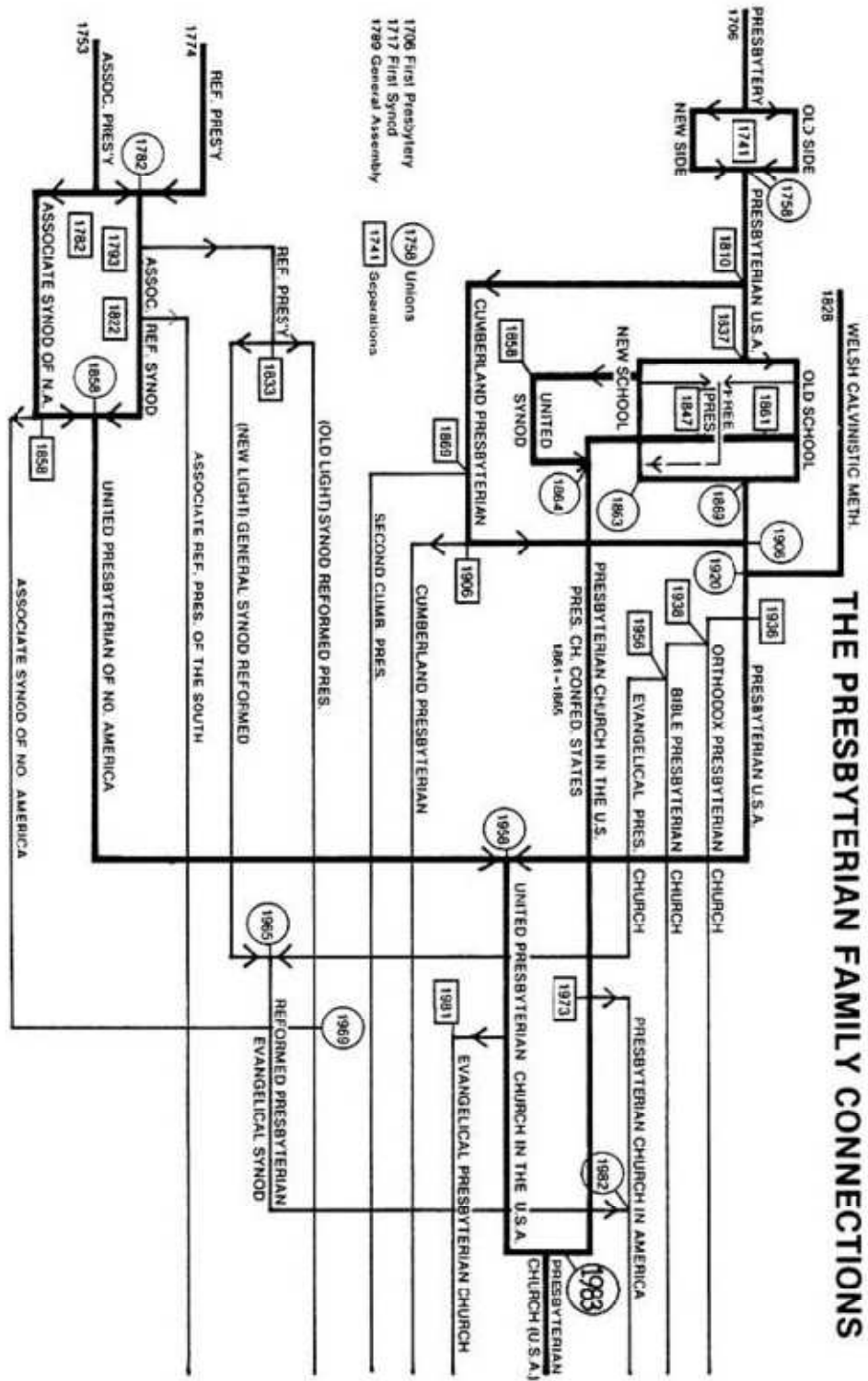
In the United States, because of past or current doctrinal differences, Presbyterian churches often overlap, with congregations of many different Presbyterian groups in any one place. The largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or PC(USA). Other Presbyterian bodies in the United States include the Presbyterian Church in America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Bible Presbyterian Church, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP Synod), the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, the Westminster Presbyterian Church in the United States (WPCUS), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS).

The territory within about a 50-mile (80 km) radius of Charlotte, North Carolina, is historically the greatest concentration of Presbyterianism in the Southern United States, while an almost identical geographic area around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, contains probably the largest number of Presbyterians in the entire nation.

The PC (USA), beginning with its predecessor bodies, has, in common with other so-called "mainline" Protestant denominations, experienced a significant decline in members in recent years. Some estimates have placed that loss at nearly half in the last forty years.

Excerpted from Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism>)

THE PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS



Excerpted from Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism>)

What is Evangelicalism?

Many “labels” are used in the church to describe Christians based on their views on Jesus, the Bible, salvation, evangelism, etc. One of the terms often used is “evangelical.” In the media the term is often associated with the “religious right.” Following is a description of evangelicalism from Wikipedia as it is understood in the church.

Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is a Protestant Christian movement which began in Great Britain in the 1730s and gained popularity in the United States during the series of Great Awakenings of the 18th and 19th century. Its key commitments are:

- The need for personal conversion (or being "born again");
- A high regard for biblical authority;
- An emphasis on teachings that proclaim the saving death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ;
- Actively expressing and sharing the gospel.

David Bebbington has termed these four distinctive aspects *conversionism*, *biblicism*, *crucicentrism*, and *activism* noting, "Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism."

Usage

The term evangelical has its etymological roots in the Greek word for "gospel" or "good news": *εὐαγγέλιον* (*evangelion*), from *eu-* "good" and *angelion* "message". In that sense, to be evangelical would mean to be a believer in the gospel that is the message of Jesus Christ.

By the English Middle Ages the term had been expanded to include not only the message, but also the New Testament which contained the message, as well as more specifically the four books of the Bible in which the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are portrayed. The first published use of the term "evangelical" in English was in 1531 by William Tyndale, who wrote "He exhorteth them to proceed constantly in the evangelical truth." One year later, the earliest recorded use in reference to a theological distinction was by Sir Thomas More, who spoke of "Tyndale [and] his evangelical brother Barns".

By the time of the Protestant Reformation, Protestant theologians began to embrace the term evangelical as referring to "gospel truth". Martin Luther referred to the *evangelische Kirche* or evangelical church to distinguish Protestants from Catholics in the Roman Catholic Church. In Germany, Switzerland and Denmark, and especially among Lutherans, the term has continued to be used in a broad sense. This can be seen in the names of certain Lutheran denominations or national organizations, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Evangelical Church in Germany.

Current usage

The contemporary North American usage of the term is influenced by the evangelical/fundamentalist controversy of the early 20th century. Evangelicalism may sometimes be perceived as the middle ground between the theological liberalism of the mainline denominations and the cultural separatism of fundamentalism. Evangelicalism has therefore been described as "the third of the leading strands in

American Protestantism, straddl[ing] the divide between fundamentalists and liberals". While the North American perception is important to understand the usage of the term, it by no means dominates a wider global view, where the fundamentalist debate was not so influential.

In the first half of the 20th century, evangelicalism in America was largely synonymous with fundamentalism. George Marsden in *Reforming Fundamentalism* says, "There was not a practical distinction between fundamentalist and evangelical: the words were interchangeable" (p. 48). When the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was formed in 1942, for example, participants included such fundamentalist leaders as Bob Jones, Sr., John R. Rice, Charles Woodbridge, Harry Ironside, and David Otis Fuller.

By the mid-1950s, largely due to the ecumenical evangelism of Billy Graham, the terms *evangelicalism* and *fundamentalism* began to refer to two different approaches. Fundamentalism aggressively attacked its liberal enemies; Evangelicalism downplayed liberalism and emphasized outreach and conversion of new members.

While some conservative evangelicals believe the label has *broadened* too much beyond its more limiting traditional distinctives, this trend is nonetheless strong enough to create significant ambiguity in the term. As a result, the dichotomy between "evangelical" and "mainline" denominations is increasingly complex, particularly with such innovations as the "emergent church" movement.

History

18th century

Evangelical movements first emerged between 1730 and 1790 and Pietism in Germany and the Netherlands, and Methodism in England and America. They featured revivals and an emphasis on personal salvation and piety, while downplaying rituals and traditions. In the American colonies the First Great Awakening of the 1740s greatly expanded the movement; it was based on revivals led by Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards and Methodist George Whitefield. In England John Wesley led the Methodist movement inside the Church of England.

19th century

The start of the 19th century saw an increase in missionary work and many of the major missionary societies were founded around this time.

The Second Great Awakening (which actually began in 1790) was primarily an American revivalist movement and resulted in substantial growth of the Methodist and Baptist churches. Charles Grandison Finney was an important preacher of this period.

Evangelicals were also concerned with social reform during this period—in England the Clapham Sect included figures such as William Wilberforce who successfully campaigned for the abolition of slavery.

20th century

Evangelicalism in the early part of the 20th century was dominated by the fundamentalist movement, which rejected liberal theology and focused on separation from the world.

In the post–World War II period, a split developed amongst evangelicals, as they disagreed among themselves about how a Christian ought to respond to an unbelieving world. The evangelicals urged that Christians must engage the culture directly and constructively, and they began to express reservations about being known to the world as *fundamentalists*. As Kenneth Kantzer put it at the time, the name *fundamentalist* had become "an embarrassment instead of a badge of honor".

The term *neo-evangelicalism* was coined by Harold Ockenga in 1947 to identify a distinct movement within self-identified fundamentalist Christianity at the time, especially in the English-speaking world. It described the mood of positivism and non-militancy that characterized that generation. The new generation of evangelicals set as their goals to abandon a militant Bible stance. Instead, they would pursue dialogue, intellectualism, non-judgmentalism, and appeasement. They further called for an increased application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas. Not all conservatives are pleased with the new direction. One author has termed it "the apostasy within evangelicalism".

The self-identified fundamentalists also cooperated in separating their opponents from the *fundamentalist* name, by increasingly seeking to distinguish themselves from the more open group, whom they often characterized derogatorily, by Ockenga's term, "neo-evangelical" or just evangelical.

The fundamentalists saw the evangelicals as often being too concerned about social acceptance and intellectual respectability, and being too accommodating to a perverse generation that needed correction. In addition, they saw the efforts of evangelist Billy Graham, who worked with non-evangelical denominations, such as the Roman Catholics (which they claimed to be heretical), as a mistake.

The post-war period also saw growth of the ecumenical movement and the founding of the World Council of Churches, which was generally regarded with suspicion by the evangelical community.

The closing years of the 20th century saw controversial postmodern influences entering some parts of evangelicalism, particularly with the emerging church movement.

Meaning of Evangelicalism

The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals states:

There are three senses in which the term "evangelical" is used today at the beginning of the 21st-century. The first is to view "evangelical" as all Christians who affirm a few key doctrines and practical emphases. British historian David Bebbington approaches evangelicalism from this direction and notes four specific hallmarks of evangelical religion: conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

A second sense is to look at evangelicalism as an organic group of movements and religious tradition. Within this context "evangelical" denotes a style as much as a set of beliefs. As a result, groups as disparate as black Baptists and Dutch Reformed Churches, Mennonites and Pentecostals, Catholic charismatics and Southern Baptists all come under the evangelical umbrella demonstrating just how diverse the movement really is.

A third sense of the term is as the self-ascribed label for a coalition that arose during the Second World War. This group came into being as a reaction against the perceived anti-intellectual, separatist, belligerent nature of the fundamentalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s. Importantly, its core

personalities (like Harold John Ockenga and Billy Graham), institutions (for instance, Moody Bible Institute, and Wheaton College), and organizations (such as the National Association of Evangelicals and Youth for Christ) have played a pivotal role in giving the wider movement a sense of cohesion that extends beyond these "card-carrying" evangelicals.

Adherents

While the movement is highly diverse and encompasses a vast number of people not all of them use the same terminology for the beliefs they have. For instance, several recent studies and surveys by sociologists and political scientists that utilize more complex definitional parameters have estimated the number of evangelicals in the U.S. at about 25–30% of the population, or roughly between 70 and 80 million people.

Excerpted from Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism>)

What is the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The PCUSA is in crisis due to controversies about salvation through Jesus Christ, the authority of the Bible for the life and faith of the church as well as recent decisions regarding sexual ethics which depart from historic Christian belief and practice. Increasing numbers of PCUSA congregations are seeking dismissal from the denomination and realigning with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). Following is information about the EPC from their website.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church had its beginning in the Reformation under John Calvin in Switzerland during the 1500's and its advancement under John Knox in Scotland during the same era. Even so, this particular wing of the Reformation has roots extending back to Bernard of Clairvaux of the 12th Century and Augustine of the 4th century. After the Reformation, its seed continued to grow during the mid-1600s with the shaping of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Our spiritual ancestors came to North America during the middle 17th century with such leaders as Francis Makemie, Jonathan Dickinson, and William Tennent. A century later, Jonathan Edwards triggered a spiritual awakening in New England and became a link in our historical chain. In short, the story of Presbyterianism is the story of the EPC.

In The Beginning...

Presbyterians come in many varieties with new branches being formed in every generation. The EPC began in the fall of 1980 and spring of 1981 when a group of pastors and elders held meetings in St. Louis, Missouri for planning and prayer. They came from mainline Presbyterian denominations like the United Presbyterian (northern churches) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (southern churches). These leaders had become increasingly distressed by liberalism within their denominations. They wanted to form a church that took seriously the words of Scripture, the theology of the historic confessions of the faith, and the evangelical fervor of Presbyterian founders. They envisioned a denomination that was truly evangelical and truly Presbyterian; hence the name.

In Essentials Unity

Six months later, the first General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church met at Ward Presbyterian Church near Detroit, Michigan. To ensure that the ideals of faith would remain foundational to the new denomination, the Assembly drafted an intentionally brief list of essential beliefs. The Essentials of Our Faith define a church that is Presbyterian in theology and church government, as well as evangelical in sharing the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In Non-essentials, Liberty

Even though the founders of the EPC valued purity of faith, they wisely saw the danger of division over non-essential issues. To protect the new denomination from needless strife, the founders promoted an understanding of freedom in which less essential matters were left to the conscience of individual churches and believers. This understanding included such matters as the freedom of a local church to elect its own officers, to exercise spiritual gifts, and to own and keep property. So EPC churches study the Scripture and make their own decisions about issues like worship style and the ordination of women. At regional and national meetings, church leaders take for granted that they will work and worship with other leaders who differ with them on these and other non-essential matters.

In All Things, Charity: Truth in Love

The final statement of our motto speaks of love. We are fellow pilgrims, walking together with our Lord. We have, individually, received his charity toward us, so we extend that charity to each other. We speak the truth to define our faith and to extend it to others. But we speak it out of love for our brothers and sisters, and for our Savior.

A Present and Future Hope

In 1981, the 1st General Assembly convened with 75 delegates representing 12 churches. When the Second General Assembly met nine months later, more than 120 elders and ministers registered as commissioners. Before the decade of the 80's ended, an impressive growth in member congregations took place. Churches in Argentina formed a presbytery and joined us in 1987. In 2004, they were released as a national church. By the mid-90's, 56 missionaries represented the EPC throughout the world. Because we believe that God uses a variety of ways to draw people to himself, many of these missionaries serve through missions agencies other than our own with EPC support. Our global mission plan focuses on planting, developing, and nurturing the Church.

We believe that God created the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to be a significant part of his plan for the renewal of believers and for witness to those outside the faith. It is our conviction that, like the ancient Queen Esther, God has brought us together for such a time as this.

Today, the EPC has over 80,000 active members in some 260 congregations with approximately 90 missionaries serving in roughly 20 different countries.

Source: EPC Website (<http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/history/>)

What is the Evangelical Covenant Order

Another option for churches disaffected with the PCUSA is to affiliate with a new Reformed body known as the Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO). Following is information about them from their website.

Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO) invites followers of Jesus who share a Reformed, Presbyterian heritage to reclaim a sense of covenanted biblical community. ECO exists to serve the local church and nurture the leader so that the Kingdom of God expands.

As an expression of The Fellowship of Presbyterians, ECO seeks to serve the ministry and mission of Christ's Church. Our name represents a three-fold commitment to make disciples of Jesus Christ (Evangelical), connect leaders through accountable biblical relationships founded in God's grace (Covenant), and commit to a shared way of life together (Order). The acronym ECO also speaks to our commitment to strengthen the "ecosystems" of local churches, providing the resources needed to grow, thrive, and reproduce.



Just as earthly ecosystems draw richness from the right kind of diversity, ECO is committed to unleashing the ministry gifts of women, men, young leaders, and every ethnicity. ECO's name also draws from the Greek term *oikos*, meaning "household," used in the Bible to reference the network of relationships that nurture an individual.

Source: Fellowship of Presbyterians website (<http://www.fellowship-pres.org/>)

Internet Resources

Following is a list of website addresses for the Presbyterian denominations in the United States.

Central Presbyterian Church <http://www.cpcdowningtown.org/>

Presbyterian Church (USA) <http://www.pcusa.org/>

Donegal Presbytery (PCUSA) <http://www.donegalpby.com/>

Other Presbyterian bodies in the United States include:

Presbyterian Church in America <http://www.pcanet.org/>

Orthodox Presbyterian Church <http://www.opc.org/>

Evangelical Presbyterian Church <http://www.epc.org/>

Reformed Presbyterian Church <http://reformedpresbyterian.org/>

Bible Presbyterian Church <http://www.bpc.org/>

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church <http://www.arpchurch.org/>

Cumberland Presbyterian Church <http://www.cumberland.org/>

Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America <http://www.cpcachurch.org/>

Westminster Presbyterian Church in the United States (WPCUS) <http://www.wpcus.org/>

Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States <http://www.rpcus.com/>

Evangelical Covenant Order <http://www.fellowship-pres.org/>