

**Basic beliefs and viewpoints of two reformed denominations:
Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA),
A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO)**

ISSUE	PCUSA	ECO
When did the denomination come into existence in its current structure / form?	1983	2012
Does the denomination list what it considers to be “essential tenets” of the faith” required to be held by all ordained leaders?	No¹	Yes (attached)
Is “Sola Scriptura,” the teaching that the Bible is the only inspired, perfect, sufficient, and authoritative word of God and the only source for Christian doctrine, upheld?	Yes and No ^{2 & 3} While upheld by many leaders, there are a wide variety of views on scripture and its authority.	Yes It is one of their essential tenets
Do significant numbers of elders and pastors question that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and the singular way of salvation?	Yes⁴	No
Is the incarnation (that Jesus is fully God and fully man) upheld	Yes and No ^{2 & 3} While official statements of the PCUSA uphold this belief, different beliefs are allowed to be held and taught by ordained leaders	Yes It is one of their essential tenets
Is substitutionary atonement by Jesus upheld	Yes and No ^{2 & 3} While official statements of the PCUSA uphold this belief, different beliefs are allowed to be held and taught by ordained leaders	Yes It is one of their essential tenets
Confessions / Creeds	8 Confessions plus 3 Catechisms	8 Confessions plus 3 Catechisms (same as PCUSA)
Are women ordained into leadership positions?	Yes Affirmed and required by their constitution	Yes Affirmed and required by their constitution
Affirms the view that marriage is between one man and one woman	No Early in 2015 the denomination officially changed the definition of marriage to be “a unique relationship between two people, traditionally a man and a woman.”	Yes And not being challenged
Are ordained leaders expected to live in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness?	No	Yes
View on Abortion	Pro-choice⁵	Pro-life

understood in the light of the whole counsel of Scripture so that unclear passages are understood in light of clearer passages; consider context, history, literary genre; consider the historical teachings of the church (e.g. confessions) for guidance and help.

Throughout the PCUSA there are more and more using different methods to interpret scripture. There are those who prioritize one's perceptions of faith above the propositional truths of Scripture. Scripture then is only "authoritative" if it melds with the preconceptions one brings to it. One liberal / progress way of reading the Bible is to start with a principle (e.g., "justice" or "equality" or "liberation"), each with its own predetermined definition, and then interpret a passage of Scripture through the lens of that predetermined principle. The result of this method is the words of Scripture are recast into meanings that, at times, defy what Scripture actually says. This is how some can claim to uphold authority of scripture yet come up with understandings completely foreign to what scripture clearly states and contradictory to what the Church universal has held for 2,000 years. This interpretation method leads to disregarding **what Scripture says** in favor of what a theologian **says that Scripture means**. One often hears the statement, "We all agree that Scripture is authoritative, but we have different ways of interpreting it." Yes, there are different ways of interpreting scripture but not all of them are of equal value or lead to right understanding.

In the recent GA Permanent Judicial Commission Parnell case (in the PCUSA this is similar to a ruling by the Supreme Court), those who sought to reference the authority of Scripture to support their view were told that since there are different ways of interpreting the Bible, than scripture cannot be used to prove any one position. One can find differing interpretations of any essential belief of the church because there are some methods of interpretation which allow the reader to shape God's word instead of God's word shaping / transforming how we think (see Romans 12:2). A person who views the Bible as a collection of myths or not of Divine inspiration will have very different methods of interpretation yielding different results.

It is no wonder when you consider the above that in 2010 Landon Whitsitt, vice-moderator of the PCUSA, declared, "Sola Scriptura is dead in most places (in the PCUSA) and rapidly dying in others."

4. The ordination vows for officers in the PCUSA still have a strong statement about this; "Do you trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?" However, among ordained leadership in the PCUSA there is no consensus regarding whether faith in Christ is necessary for salvation, as shown by a survey from the Research Services of the PCUSA (Presbyterian Panel Survey on Religious and Demographic Profile of Presbyterians) which found that less than half of PCUSA pastors agree that only followers of Jesus can be saved. At the 2001 GA a resolution was introduced to declare "Jesus is the singular saving Lord", but the language failed to pass and instead that GA only could affirm "Jesus is unique." At the 2006 GA, before modifying a proposed resolution to say Jesus was "uniquely Saviour", a group of commissioners (all ordained leaders in the PCUSA) stated their belief that Christ is only one among many paths to eternal life, a view held by many theological liberal ordained leaders in the PCUSA.

5. While some will say the PC(USA) affirms both sides of the abortion debate, it would be difficult to support that claim. The PC(USA) has two agencies who are members of an abortion rights lobbying group in Washington, DC but does not belong to a lobby group supporting a pro-life viewpoint. The General Assembly voted in 2002 to affirm late-term abortions like partial-birth abortion, something both houses of Congress overwhelming rejected in a bi-partisan fashion. The medical insurance provided through the PC(USA) Board of Pensions pays for any abortion procedure regardless of the reason for the abortion (e.g. Was the abortion done to save the life of a mother? To abort a child with an identified pre-existing condition? For gender selection? For convenience as a form of birth control? Member of Washington lobby group for abortion rights, see <http://www.rcrc.org/about/members.cfm>

Approves abortion of babies who can live outside the womb, see

http://www.ppl.org/old/PPLNews_Fall2002_1.html

Abortion plan pays for any abortion, see <http://www.ppl.org/index.php/publications/presbyterian-church-usa-abortion-policy/67-abortion-coverage-by-pcusa-medical-plan/314-2008-updated-ppl-booklet-on-pcusa-medical-benefits-plan-coverage-of-abortion>

Including late term abortion's like partial birth, see

<http://www.ppl.org/index.php/publications/presbyterian-church-usa-abortion-policy/66-pcusa-policy-on-abortion/132-bop-medical-benefits-plan-covers-late-term-abortion>