

Journey in Christian Commitment

Trinity Presbyterian Church

1500 Park Blvd.

West Sacramento, CA 95691

www.trinitywestsac.org

JOURNEY IN CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

Dear Friends,

We are so pleased to have you join us in the Journey in Christian Commitment class. This is a journey because together we will learn about each other, our faith, and Jesus Christ who brings us together. It's also Christian commitment because when we accept Christ as our Lord and risen Savior, we commit our lives to him as his followers. Together, the journey and the commitment becomes a lifelong event of learning, fellowship, and adventure.

Being a member of Trinity means acknowledging Jesus Christ as your personal savior. It also means that you are ready to be involved with Trinity, becoming active in its fellowship, ministries, attending worship regularly, and donating your time, talents, and resources including your finances in order to help carry out the Gospel of Jesus to the world.

The goal of this course is for us to learn about:

- Our relationship with Jesus Christ and each other
- The history of the Reformed Christian movement and Presbyterian Church
- What we believe
- Trinity's past, present and future
- Our spiritual gifts

By the time the course is over we hope you walk away with:

- A deeper understanding of yourself and your faith
- A stronger relationship with Jesus Christ
- Relationships with others at Trinity
- A decision to join Trinity Church and get involved with its ministries

Again, we are overjoyed with your decision to join us in worship and to participate in this ministry. We look forward to getting to know you better.

The Members of Trinity Presbyterian Church.

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SEMINAR: *JOURNEY IN CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT*

If you are attending the Journey in Christian Commitment course as a two day (Friday night and Saturday morning) event, it is particularly helpful to arrive prepared.

Please have the following completed prior to arriving at the seminar:

- ✠ Read over as much of the material as possible, especially Sections 3 – 6

- ✠ Complete the following forms:
 - *Getting to Know You*
 - *Membership Application* (if you plan on joining)
 - *Faith Journey*

- ✠ Take the online spiritual gifts survey (A hardcopy version is available if internet access is not an option.)
 - Survey is on Trinity's home page: www.TrinityWestSac.org
 - Bring the results of the survey with you to the seminar

Accomplishing each of the above items will make everyone's experience at the seminar as valuable as possible and will assist our team leaders in teaching the course.

Thanks.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Today's Date: _____

Name: _____

Spouse's Name (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Children Living at Home (if applicable)

Name	B-Date	Age (year)	Baptized?
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please tell us about your involvement with Trinity:

1. Are you considering Church Membership?

Already a Member _____ Yes _____ No _____ Still Praying About It _____

2. What brought you to Trinity?

3. What keeps you coming back?

4. What would you like to see at your home church?

5. Who is Jesus Christ?

6. My role at Trinity is...

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

1. How do you plan to become a member of Trinity?

Letter of Transfer (I am currently a member of another church)

What is the name of the church you would like to transfer from?

Church: _____

Address: _____

Reaffirmation of Faith

(I have made of public proclamation of my faith at another church but I am not a member at any church. I would like to confess Christ as my Savior as a member of this church.)

Confession of Faith

(I have never joined a church before.)

2. Have you been baptized? Yes _____ *No _____

If yes, where and when?

3. Have you been ordained as an Elder or Deacon?

Yes, as an Elder / Deacon at _____ church.

Address: _____

No

* If you have not been baptized, you will receive baptism at the time you become a member

SESSION ONE: PURPOSE

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.

~ Romans 8:28

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among
you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

~ 1 Corinthians 1:10

Purpose of this Course

The purpose of the Journey in Christian Commitment class is to:

- Get to know one another
- Learn about Jesus Christ
- Learn about the history of the Reformed Tradition and the Presbyterian Church
- Learn what makes Presbyterians unique
- Learn about Trinity and its core values
- Learn about our own faith and spiritual gifts
- Become a member of Trinity
- Find ways to get involved in the mission and ministries of Trinity.

Introductions

Pair off with another person that you do not know very well. Share the following information with your partner:

1. Your name
2. Why you come to Trinity
3. What you like to see in a church

After a few minutes, each person will introduce his/her partner to the rest of the class.

Expectations

A time for discussing with the rest of the groups what we hope to gain from this class.

In other words, what are your expectations? What do you hope to get from the class?

Five Questions for Membership

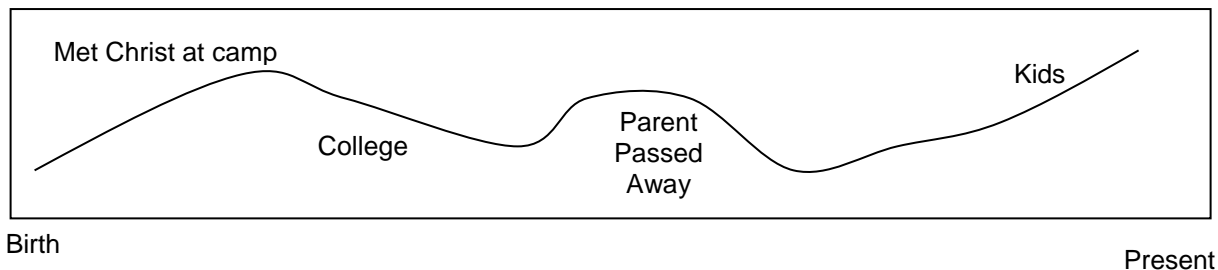
1. Do you believe in the one, triune God who is known in the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
2. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and risen Savior and do you profess Jesus Christ to be the head of the church which is his body, and to be alone, the sole redeemer and savior of the world?
3. Do you intend to take part in the common life and worship of Trinity Presbyterian Church by praying and studying Scripture, participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and supporting the call of the church through the joyful giving of money, time, and talents?
4. Do you intend to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the gospel of salvation to humankind, seeking to address the physical and spiritual needs of the world, worshiping regularly, preserving the truth, promoting social righteousness and exhibiting the transforming love of Jesus to the world?
5. Do you acknowledge that you will struggle in your faith, have doubts and need reassurance in spiritual matters and when this occurs will you seek encouragement by praying, reading the Scriptures and sharing your concerns with fellow Christians who will love and support you?

Faith Journey

On the next page you'll see a Faith Journey template. Beginning at "birth" and working your way to "present" draw a line that represents your journey with Christ throughout your life.

Consider major events in your life such as hearing about Christ, a tragedy, or relationship that will affect whether the line goes up or down.

Example:



MY FAITH JOURNEY

Directions:

Draw a line from left to right, starting at your birth working toward the present that represents your journey with Christ. Think about those moments that impacted your life like going to college, getting married, having kids, changing jobs, having a spiritual moment or a faith crisis...

A blank coordinate system for a faith journey timeline. It consists of a vertical line on the left and a horizontal line extending to the right. The horizontal line is labeled "Birth" at its left end and "Present" at its right end. The area above the horizontal line is intended for drawing a line representing the journey with Christ, with key moments marked along the way.

SESSION TWO: FAITH FOUNDATIONS

That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built.

~ Luke 6:48

Sharing Faith Journeys

Take a few minutes if you would like to share your faith journey with the rest of the class.

Questions 1 & 2: One God; Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

- 1. Do you believe in the one, triune God who is known in the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit?**

How Many Gods?

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! (NASB)

1 Kings 8:60

...so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.

Isaiah 46:9

...for I am God, and there is no other, I am God, and there is no one like me,

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

There is _____ true God.

What About the Trinity?

God and Jesus Credited with Creation

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1:1-3

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

Colossians 1:15-16

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers-- all things have been created through him and for him.

The Holy Spirit Comes From Both the Father and Jesus

John 14:26

[Jesus said] But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

John 16:7

[Jesus said] Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

The Holy Spirit Raised Jesus From the Dead and Gives Us Life

Romans 8:11

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

God is _____ in _____ NOT _____ in _____

2. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and risen savior and do you profess Jesus Christ to be the head of the church which is his body and to be alone, your sole redeemer and savior of the world?

Jesus as Lord and God

John 20:28

Thomas answered [Jesus], "My Lord and my God!"

Matthew 1:23

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

Jesus as Savior

John 3:16-17

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

SESSION THREE: REBUILDING

Reformed Watchwords: "Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone"

*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda
The Church reformed, always reforming."*

The Reformation

Martin Luther and the 95 Theses

Martin Luther was a Catholic who lived in Germany in the 1500s. He disagreed with the Catholic Church in its sale of indulgences.



According to the Catholic Encyclopedia at www.newadvent.com an indulgence is: "the extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due, in God's justice, to sin that has been forgiven, which remission is granted by the Church in the exercise of the power of the keys, through the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and of the saints, and for some just and reasonable motive."

In other words, an indulgence is the removal of trial and tribulations for sins already committed and can be earned through prayer, confession, or some other approved act by the Catholic Church.

Martin Luther believed the Catholic Church was attempting to "sell" indulgences to people in order to earn money for itself.

In 1531, Martin Luther devised 95 reasons he had against the sale of indulgences. On the morning of October 31, 1531 he nailed his "95 Theses" on the front door of the Catholic cathedral in Wittenberg in order to publicly discuss them with the clergy of the Church.

The posting of such requests was not uncommon. But Luther's attitude and perceived attack against the Church by the Pope and its supporters was, and Luther was ultimately excommunicated from the Catholic Church.

Luther maintained his argument against the sale of indulgences and passionately supported the idea of salvation by grace through faith and not by works. His followers became Lutherans.

Ironically, Luther was not primarily interested in starting a new movement. He was however, interested in "cleaning up" or "reforming" the Catholic Church from the inside out.

Martin Luther's action of posting the 95 Theses on the doors of the Catholic Church in Wittenberg has become known as the start of the Protestant Reformation.

Following is Luther's statement which he nailed to the Church doors and three of his 95 Theses:

"Out of love and concern for the truth, and with the object of eliciting it, the following heads will be the subject of a public discussion at Wittenberg under the presidency of the reverend father, Martin Luther, Augustinian, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and duly appointed Lecturer on these subjects in that place. He requests that whoever cannot be present personally to debate the matter orally will do so in absence in writing."

Three of the 95 theses:

#21. Therefore those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope's indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved;

#47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of pardons is a matter of free will, and not of commandment.

#66. The treasures of the indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the riches of men.

Note: The word "Protestant" comes from the root word "protest."

John Calvin

John Calvin was a Frenchman who had intended to earn a degree and enter the priesthood. His father on the other hand forced him to enter law school. However, sometime between 1532 and 1534 Calvin had a sudden conversion and dedicated his life to serving God.

Calvin recognized that the growing Protestant Reformation troubled the King of France as such a movement could be considered a threat to his Crown.

In 1536, at the age of 27, John Calvin wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in an attempt to support the Protestant Movement and at the same time convince the King of France that such a reformation had nothing to do with his authority as king.



The King of France did not accept Calvin's argument and Calvin was forced to leave France. Calvin was invited by a friend, William Farel, to stay in Geneva, Switzerland.

While in Geneva Calvin and Farel worked together to create a new form of government for the church and city. They attempted to create a new orderly and religiously pure city. Things did not always go well, and for a time they were evicted from the city.

After three years of living in Strasburg, where Calvin was married, had children and rewrote the *Institutes*. He and Farel returned to Geneva in 1541.

Geneva ultimately became known as the birthplace of the Reformed movement and Calvin's form of government and the *Institutes* have become the building blocks for the way we govern the Presbyterian church today and the theological beliefs we hold.

The Spectacles of Scripture

Calvin refers to the Bible as the Spectacles of Scripture. Studying the Bible helps bring into focus God and our relationship with him.

SESSION FOUR: I MUST CONFESS

Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

~ *Romans 10:9*

What makes Presbyterians Unique?

We Are Confessional

Book of Confessions

Half our constitution

(*Book of Order* the other half)

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty,
whence He shall come to judge the living and
the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic
church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Amen.

Brief Statement of Faith

In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve. We trust in Jesus Christ,
Fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal. We trust in God,
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God's condemnation.
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.
In everlasting love,
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
to bless all families of the earth.
Hearing their cry,
God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.
Loving us still,
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still. We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the church.
The same Spirit
who inspired the prophets and apostles

rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.

In a broken and fearful world

the Spirit gives us courage

to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,

we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,

even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,

praying, Come, Lord Jesus! With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death

can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Form of Government

Three Forms of Church Government

1. Episcopal

This is the form of government used by such churches as the Catholic Church and the Methodist Church.

A central council, or the like, has much authority over the running and ordinances of a local congregation. In this type of system a pastor is placed by the council or a bishop in a church and the congregation receives the pastor that is sent to them.

2. Congregational

Congregational government is used by Baptist churches among others.

A congregational church is fully democratic. The congregation as a whole retains all authority and makes all decisions of interest by vote. A pastor would be hired and fired by a vote of the congregation.

All congregations in this system are independent of one another based on the way each church governs itself.

3. Presbyterian

The Presbyterian form of government is a representative democracy. The early American fathers modeled our United States government from the Presbyterian Church.

In a Presbyterian Church, elders (men and women) are elected by the people to oversee the mission and government of a particular church. If a Presbyterian Church is in need of a pastor, the people elect members to serve as a search committee. The search committee selects a candidate based on the mission and vision of the congregations and presents that candidate to the congregation for a vote. The congregation could approve the candidate by a majority vote or can vote against the search committee's recommendation. If the congregation votes against the search committee's recommendation (which is rare) the search continues.

There are several layers of checks and balances in the Presbyterian form of government.

Overview of the PC(USA)

The PC(USA) is broken down into levels of government, based, in large part, on geographical location. It works to think of our levels of government in terms of the United States.

In the United States we have cities. Cities combine together to form counties. Counties come together to form states. All fifty states comprise the United States of America.

In the Presbyterian Church we have about 11,000 local churches (like cities). (We call a local church a *particular* church.) When a group of at least 12 churches and 12 pastors come together, they form a Presbytery. Many Presbyteries contain much more than 12 churches. Overall, there are a total of 173 Presbyteries in the PC(USA). Presbyteries can be described as district governing bodies. They are the equivalent of counties.

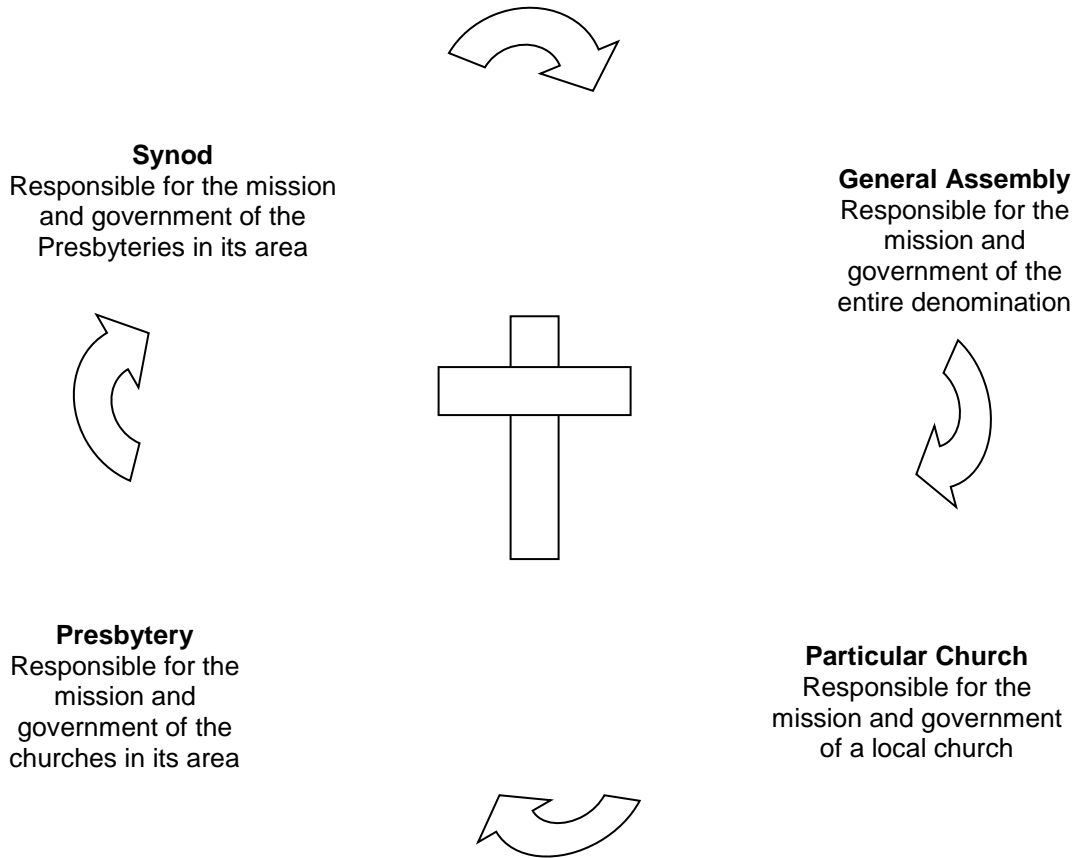
Presbyteries work together to form Synods. Synods are like the states in the above analogy. They can be considered regional governing bodies.

All Synods together form the General Assembly. Elected representatives from churches, Presbyteries, and Synods meet at least once every two years for General Assembly. It is at General Assembly that we discuss such matters as theological doctrine and form of government as it affects the entire denomination.

The purpose of these layers of government is to maintain checks and balances of our churches and ministries. These layers are intended to support, encourage, and provide resources to our churches. While a lower governing body is expected to fall under the supervision of a higher governing body, the higher governing bodies are intended to support and care for the lower bodies.

Please refer to the organizational chart on the next page:

Organizational Chart of the PC(USA)



Our Constitution

Churches are bound together through our reformed faith, Scripture and our Constitution. Our Constitution consists of two volumes: *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.

The *Book of Confessions*

The *Book of Confessions* is a collection of theological statements made by the Christian Movement and bodies of believers in the Reformed Tradition. Many statements or confessions were made during times of theological disagreements (the Nicene Creed), or through times of great strife when people proclaimed the authority of God over mankind (The Theological Declaration of Barmen).

These confessions are declarations before God and the world of what we believe. What we do as a church falls under these confessions.

The *Book of Order*

The *Book of Order* is the second part of our constitution. It contains our Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and Rules of Discipline.

The *Book of Order* is intended to encourage and maintain the order of the local and greater church and serves as a guideline to all levels of government as to our responsibility and authority.

Our Theological Beliefs

Sovereignty of God

What does “sovereign” mean?

A Sovereign God:

- Sustains
- Creates
- Rules
- Redeems the world

A Sovereign God Is:

- Majestic
- Holy
- Infinite

Food for Thought

What does it mean for God to be infinite?

Are we as humans finite or infinite?

How does our ability to understand affect our understanding of God?

Reformed Guidelines

The church reformed, always reforming.¹

Protestant Watchwords: “Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone.”²

¹ Book of Order, G-2.0200

² Ibid., G-2.0400

SESSION FIVE: IT TAKES TWO (SACRAMENTS)

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
~ *Luke 22:19*

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
~ *Matthew 28:19*

Introduction to the Sacraments

Thomas Aquinas (1225? – 1274), a Catholic theologian now recognized as a saint, defined sacrament as, "the sign of a sacred thing insofar as it recognizes man."³ Due in part to this definition, the Catholic Church has seven sacraments; baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and marriage.

Our faith agrees with Aquinas that a sacrament is a visible form of an invisible grace. We believe this definition alone is too broad and the opportunities for sacraments seem almost endless.

Calvin defines a sacrament as:

"an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us, in offer to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men."⁴

Calvin's definition is a bit more specific in that it indicates three things:

1. God seals his promise of good will in us
2. God's promise is to sustain us in our faith
3. The act of the sacrament is a public act as it takes place in the presence of God, his angels, and other people.

As our faith developed, it was agreed that a sacrament should fit this definition and that number of sacraments should be limited to those activities Christ commanded: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism

Our Book of Order helps explain what Baptism is and what it does by stating,

"Baptism is the sign and seal of incorporation in Christ. In Baptism, we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection. In Baptism, we die to what separates us from God and are raised to newness of life in Christ. Baptism points us back to the grace of God expressed in Jesus Christ, who died for us and who was raised for us. Baptism points us forward to that same Christ who will fulfill God's purpose in God's promised future."⁵

³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae III, 60, ad 2.*

⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.1

⁵ *Book of Order*, W-2/3001 and W-2.3002

Covenant and the Water of Baptism

The Book of Order also explains Baptism as a symbol of God's covenant and the purpose of water:



"in Baptism, the Holy Spirit binds the Church in covenant to its Creator and Lord. The water of Baptism symbolizes the waters of Creation, of the Flood, and of the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the water of Baptism links us to the goodness of God's creation and to the grace of God's covenants with Noah and Israel...in his ministry, Jesus offered the gift of living water."⁶

A New Circumcision

In the Old Testament, converts to God were circumcised as a demonstration of their faith. But not all people can be circumcised. Baptism has become a new circumcision.

What Baptism Signifies

Baptism signifies many things. Some of what Baptism signifies is:

- God's faithfulness
- Washing away of sin
- Rebirth
- Adoption into the family of God

One Baptism

Baptism is recognized as an act of God first. We may respond to Baptism, but it is God who is truly acting in the sacrament. Since God is perfect and complete, the seal God places upon us can never be broken. This is why we believe in one Baptism. Ephesians says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5)

Infant Baptism

Because Baptism is an act of God and not an act of humanity, we believe in infant baptism. Baptism of a child, "witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith."⁷

Rebaptism

Some people may wish to be baptized again as adults or when they are old enough to understand what is happening. But God's acts are a mystery and no one truly understands how God seals his promises in us.

If a person, who was baptized as an infant and chooses to publicly declare their love and acceptance of Christ as his or her risen Savior, s/he may do so by a public proclamation of faith, through a service of renewal, or through the other sacrament, the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is the other sacrament Jesus commanded us to participate in. According to the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the church in the city of Corinth, Christ commanded us to repeat this act. Paul writes:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

~1 Corinthians 11:23-25

⁶ Ibid., W-2.3003

⁷ Ibid, W-2.3007b

The Lord's Supper serves as a reminder of:

- Christ's sacrifice and the sacrifice we make to be his followers
- Christ's resurrection and the resurrection we share as his disciples
- The vows we took at Baptism
- The vows we can take today if we were too young at our Baptism to have made a vow to follow Christ.

The Lord's Supper and One Church

When participating in the Lord's Supper, all the believers are united together as one body with Christ. This is emphasized each year on World Communion Sunday.



The Elements as Symbols

The bread and wine (fruit of the vine) serve as symbols of Jesus' body and blood. In other words, they do not change in any way. They remain bread and wine. However, symbols are powerful as they signify the real sacrifice Christ made for us and as such, the bread and wine should not be wasted.

While the bread and wine are symbols of Christ's body and blood, Christ is present in the moment of communion. His Spirit is among us and we are united in the Spirit as believers and members of the body of Christ.

Interesting Fact

The Catholic tradition believes in *transubstantiation*; the belief that the "substance" of the bread and wine changes into that of the Body and Blood of Christ. (As reformed Christians, we do not believe this and maintain that the bread and wine remain bread and wine and serve as symbols.)

SESSION SIX: I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

~ 1 John 4:1

What We Don't Believe

Sometimes it helps to understand what we do believe by clarifying what we DO NOT believe⁸

We do not believe in:

Salvation by good works

We are saved only by grace. Despite our failure, God decided to save us through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Historic succession of bishops

Where does the authority of the church reside? Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, Methodist and Episcopal churches believe it is carried in the office of the bishop. Bishops receive their authority from previous bishops, all of whom received their authority from still earlier bishops. Catholics and some Anglicans trace this authority back to the apostles themselves. Presbyterians believe church authority is not carried in individuals this way; rather, church leaders can declare the will of God only on the authority of Scripture.

Altars

An altar is a place where a sacrifice is offered and it is often viewed with special reverence. In the traditional Roman Catholic understanding the priest re-offers Christ on the altar as a sacrifice to God. Presbyterians believe the sacrifice of Christ has already been offered once for all, it needs no repetition, and the action of a priest cannot make it occur again. In the Presbyterian view, therefore, the Lord's Supper takes place at a table rather than an altar. Although many Communion tables are rather ornate, the table itself holds no particular significance or holiness; it is simply a supper table.

Praying to saints/praying to Mary

Praying is an act of worship and devotion which should be offered only to God. Although it's nice to ask friends to pray for us, we should not ask people from history to pray for us. We do not believe in mediators between us and God. We have a personal relationship with God and pray directly to him.

Reincarnation

Reincarnation is the belief that the soul, when the body dies, comes back to earth in another body or form. We do not believe in reincarnation. As Christians we believe our death is a transition into the presence of God's glory.

Fate

This is different from the Presbyterian doctrine of predestination, which says God chose to redeem us, long before we could even understand what that might mean. Because God chose us before the foundation of the world, that means we are predestined to life. That does not take away our ability to choose; we make many free choices every day. Fate takes away our free choice and sends our lives into a future that has no purpose. God has a purpose for our lives and we are free to explore it.

Purgatory

Where do people go when they die? We expect the answer to be "heaven or hell." Yet in the Middle Ages people believed that we need constant forgiveness for our sins. In other words, when a believing person confesses their sin, they are forgiven for all their sins up to that moment of confession. But if they continue to sin after their confession and then die before they can confess their "most recent" sins, their unconfessed/unforgiven sins prevent them from getting into heaven. So the doctrine of purgatory was

⁸ This section adapted from www.pcusa.org. On home page, click on "Who We Are" for more information.

created—a place where the remainders of our sinfulness would be purged away. This was a worthy speculation, but Presbyterians believe it is not necessary. God will indeed redeem us and cleanse us from all our sins and we will be ready for heaven without our needing to theorize a third possible place to go when we die.

Mortal and Venial Sins

In Roman Catholic thinking when you die you are carrying the guilt of all the sins you have committed since your last confession. If your sins are venial (relatively slight), you will now work them off in purgatory. A mortal sin, in contrast, cannot be resolved in purgatory; an un-confessed mortal sin means you are damned to hell. Presbyterians do not believe that sins can be graded this way. Sin is sin. Forgiveness is God's free gift in Christ. Confession and assurance of pardon are not what enables God to forgive us, but rather what enables us to recognize or feel or experience that we are forgiven.

Purgatory is different from Mortal and Venial sins because Purgatory is the place people believe you go to in order to work off your venial sins.

Faith Journeys

Let's take a moment to share our Faith Journeys if time allows.

SESSION SEVEN: WHO WE ARE

“Who are you?” – The Who

“I yam what I yam” - Popeye

“Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I AM” – Jesus

“I know you are but what am I” – Pee Wee Herman

Trinity Presbyterian Church: Past, Present and Future

Financial Faithfulness

Being good stewards of our finances is a privilege of all Christians and members of Trinity.

In fact, the only time God says we can test him has to do with our financial faithfulness and God's faithfulness in return:

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus *put me to the test*, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. – Malachi 3:10 (*italics added*)

One of the four questions new members are asked to respond to discusses being financially faithful to the church:

Do you intend to take part in the common life and worship of Trinity by praying and studying Scripture, participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and **supporting the call of the church through the joyful giving of money, time and talents?**

Other key verses on tithing and financial faithfulness are:

Psalm 24:1

The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;

Leviticus 27:30

All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the LORD's; they are holy to the LORD

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

¹ We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; ² for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints-- ⁵ and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, ⁶ so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. ⁷ Now as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you-- so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. ⁸ I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something-- ¹¹ now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means.

¹² For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has-- not according to what one does not have. ¹³ I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴ your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. ¹⁵ As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

Malachi 3:8-12

⁸ Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me-- the whole nation of you! ¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. ¹¹ I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the LORD of hosts. ¹² Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

Please answer the following question:

Why is it important for members to be financially faithful?

SESSION EIGHT: GIFT RAP

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

~ Ephesians 4:11-12

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

After reading the above passage, please answer the following questions:

What does verse 4 and 5 say about myself?

What does verse 12 say about me and the church?

Opportunities to Get Plugged In

Where are some areas of the church you believe you could make a difference?

Thinking Back to the Beginning (At Least of this Class)

Now that you've read through all the materials and have been through the course (congratulations by the way!), please take a moment to reconsider the following two questions you answered at the beginning. Are your answers different? Why? Be prepared to discuss this in a class setting.

1. Jesus Christ is...

2. My role at Trinity is.....

MY TESTIMONY

Taking what you've learned in the class, please take the time to write down your testimony. Consider the following: Who is Jesus Christ? What kind of relationship do I have with Jesus? How can I use my spiritual gifts to serve God? What is my role at Trinity?

STEPS TO HAVING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

Can Anyone Be Saved? (Including Me?)

In a word, YES!

It does not matter where we come from or what we've done. Jesus came so that all who believe may have life – John 10:9.

This means that God's love is available and offered to all of us. Like receiving a present, all we have to do is accept that gift and enjoy it!

1. God Loves You and Has a Plan for Your Life

God loves you and desires for your life to be fulfilled! He longs for you to be in a personal relationship with Him.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

God even sent His Son to the world that we might have everlasting life,

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" -John 3:16

2. We are Sinful and Separated from God.

Unfortunately, we sin against God. A sin is anything that we do which against the will of God. The result of our sin is that we are separated from God who has no part of sin.

Romans 3:23 says, *"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* The result of our sin is death – Romans 6:23.

3. Jesus Christ is the Only Way to a Relationship with God

Jesus died in our place on the cross. In other words, Jesus traded places with us. He took our sins and gave us his life as a substitution: *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* – Romans 5:8.

The Good News is that Jesus did not stay dead! Because Jesus never sinned himself, he did not deserve to die so he was raised from the dead: *"Christ died for our sins... He was buried... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures... He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred..."* -I Corinthians 15:3-6.

Jesus is the ONLY way to salvation and a renewed relationship with God. Jesus said, *"I am the Way the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me"* – John 14:6.

4. Receive Jesus Christ as Your Personal Savior

When we ask Jesus into our lives, we become the children of God!

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" – John 1:12.

Jesus wants to be a part of our life and even makes the effort to come to us!

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

We have salvation by believing in Jesus and not by what we do:

"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" -Ephesians 2:8-9.

5. Pray to be Saved

If you want to ask Christ into your life, here is a simple prayer:

Dear Father in heaven,

I admit that I am not perfect and that I have sinned against you.

Please forgive me for my sins. I believe and accept that Jesus is the Son of God and that he suffered and died on the cross, paying the punishment for my sins.

Jesus, I accept you as my Lord and risen Savior.

I believe that I have the Spirit of Jesus living inside of me, that I am forgiven, and that I am now a Christian.

I know that I have salvation and everlasting life and when I die, I will live eternally with Jesus.

STAFF AND MINISTRY TEAM INFORMATION

CHURCH STAFF

Senior Pastor, Head of Staff	Rev. Eric Keller
Associate Pastor of Latino Ministries	Vacant
Worship Director	Vacant
Pianist	Andrey Andrievskiy
Choir Director	Gayle Andrade
Youth Director	Glen Godfrey
Kids Director	Sue Goodwin
Office Administrator	Jane Gentry

VOLUNTEER STAFF

Care Liaison	Vi Taylor
Receptionist	Carol Onalfo

ELECTED POSITIONS

Facilities Manager	Linda Brooks
A/V Coordinator	Robb Perrine
Treasurer	Karla Rassmussen
Clerk of Session	Cora Hocker
Personnel	Anna Nieman
Budget and Stewardship	Joe Goeden

STATED MINISTRIES

Ministry	Coordinator
Church Life	Robb Perrine
Kids Ministries	Sue Goodwin
Mission and Outreach	Ken Trott
Small Groups	Rev. Eric Keller
Worship	Judi Chiboucas
Youth	Glen Godfrey