

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

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>PCUSA</b>	<b>ECO</b>	<b>EPC</b>
<b>When did the denomination come into existence in its current structure / form?</b>	<b>1983</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>1980</b>
<b>Does the denomination list what it considers to be “essential tenets” of the faith” required to be held by all ordained leaders?</b>	<b>No<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Yes (attached)</b>	<b>Yes (attached)</b>
<b>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?</b>	<b>Yes and No<sup>2 &amp; 3</sup></b> While upheld by many leaders, there are a wide variety of views on scripture and its authority.	<b>Yes</b> It is one of their essential tenets	<b>Yes</b> It is one of their essential tenets
<b>Do significant numbers of elders and pastors question that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and the singular way of salvation?</b>	<b>Yes<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is the incarnation (that Jesus is fully God and fully man) upheld</b>	<b>Yes and No<sup>2 &amp; 3</sup></b> While official statements of the PCUSA uphold this belief, different beliefs are allowed to be held and taught by ordained leaders	<b>Yes</b> It is one of their essential tenets	<b>Yes</b> It is one of their essential tenets
<b>Is substitutionary atonement by Jesus upheld</b>	<b>Yes and No<sup>2 &amp; 3</sup></b> While official statements of the PCUSA uphold this belief, different beliefs are allowed to be held and taught by ordained leaders	<b>Yes</b> It is one of their essential tenets	<b>Yes</b> It is one of their essential tenets
<b>Confessions / Creeds</b>	<b>8 Confessions plus 3 Catechisms</b>	<b>8 Confessions plus 3 Catechisms</b> (same as PCUSA)	<b>Westminster Confession of Faith</b>
<b>Are women ordained into leadership positions?</b>	<b>Yes</b> Affirmed and required by their constitution	<b>Yes</b> Affirmed and required by their constitution	<b>Yes and No</b> While a majority of presbyteries and congregations ordain women, it is not seen as an essential belief.
<b>Affirms the view that marriage is between one man and one woman</b>	<b>Yes and No</b> This is their official position but some leaders are not abiding by it, and others are trying to change it and most agree they will succeed soon.	<b>Yes</b> And not being challenged	<b>Yes</b> And not being challenged
<b>Are ordained leaders expected to live in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>View on Abortion</b>	<b>Pro-choice<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Pro-life</b>	<b>Pro-life</b>
<b>Per Capita (request for funds to help pay for administrative costs of denomination)</b>	<b>Yes</b> Currently \$29 per member and is not mandatory, though some believe it may become mandatory)	<b>Yes</b> 1% of church budget and is mandatory.)	<b>Yes</b> \$17 per member and can not become mandatory, per polity.
<b>Ownership of congregation’s property</b>	<b>Denomination hold property in trust</b>	<b>Congregation owns property</b>	<b>Congregation owns property</b>



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 Savoir”, 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](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-abortions>

## **Evangelical Presbyterian Church's Essentials of Our Faith**

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith:

We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!

Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.

The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.

Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.

The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.

Jesus Christ will come again to the earth-personally, visibly, and bodily-to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20)

The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10)

These Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

# The 19 key points of Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterian's essential tenets

(to read the entire page statement go to <http://www.fellowship-pres.org/wp-content/uploads/Theology10.pdf> (pages 5-8))

1. The great purpose toward which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever
2. We glorify God by recognizing and receiving His authoritative self-revelation, both in the infallible Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and also in the incarnation of God the Son.
3. With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- who is both one essence and three persons.
4. Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human.
5. The divinity of the Son is in no way impaired, limited, or changed by His gracious act of assuming a human nature, and that His true humanity is in no way undermined by His continued divinity.
6. The risen Jesus, who was sent from the Father, has now ascended to the Father in His resurrected body and remains truly human.
7. The same Jesus Christ who is now ascended and who will one day return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead.
8. We are able to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God only through the work of the Holy Spirit
9. The present disordered state of the world, in which we and all things are subject to misery and to evil, is not God's doing, but is rather a result of humanity's free, sinful rebellion against God's will.
10. No part of human life is untouched by sin. Our desires are no longer trustworthy guides to goodness, and what seems natural to us no longer corresponds to God's design.
11. In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit we are brought into right relation with the Father, who receives us as His adopted children. Jesus Christ is the only Way to this adoption, the sole path by which sinners become children of God,
12. Having lost true freedom of will in the fall, we are incapable of turning toward God of our own volition. God chooses us for Himself in grace before the foundation of the world, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy.
13. Through His regenerating and sanctifying work, the Holy Spirit grants us faith and enables holiness, so that we may be witnesses of God's gracious presence to those who are lost.
14. In Christ, we are adopted into the family of God and find our new identity as brothers and sisters of one another, since we now share one Father
15. Within the covenant community of the church, God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline.
16. The ministries of the church reflect the three-fold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king - reflected in the church's ordered ministries of teaching elders, deacons, and ruling elders.
17. Jesus teaches us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. There is no part of human life that is off limits to the sanctifying claims of God.
18. Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, which is initiated, sustained and fulfilled by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.
19. As we practice the discipline of regular self-examination and confession, we are especially guided by the Ten Commandments.