

# St. Johns Presbyterian Church

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

## SJPC Statement of Beliefs

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St. Johns Presbyterian Church has the following statement of beliefs listed on its web site

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<b>Biblically-Based</b>	We believe the Bible is God's Word and the final authority for all matters of faith and practice. We strive to understand it and stand under it in all aspects of our lives. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Mark 12:29-30; John 14:21)
<b>Devotion</b>	We believe that the pursuit of full devotion to Christ and His cause is normal for every believer. (Philippians 2:3-5; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Philippians 3:12-14)
<b>Prayer</b>	We believe in the importance of prayer as provision God gives us for knowing Him and participating in the work of His kingdom. (1 John 5:14-15; John 15:7)
<b>Excellence</b>	We believe that excellence honors God and blesses people. (Colossians 3:17; Malachi 1:13-14; Jeremiah 48; 10)
<b>Biblical, Spirit-led Teaching</b>	We believe that biblical, Spirit-led teaching is a primary catalyst for changing lives. (2 Timothy 2:16-17; James 1:25)
<b>Distinguished by Love</b>	We believe Christians are to be distinguished by our love, endeavoring to guard the sanctity of every human life and to love one another as Christ loves us. (Mark 12:31; John 13:34-35; Exodus 20:13)
<b>Small Groups</b>	We believe that significant life change happens in the context of biblically-based small groups. (Luke 6:13; 2 Timothy 2:2; Philippians 4:9)
<b>Every Member a Minister</b>	We believe that God gifts and prepares every believer for ministry, and expects every believer to serve Him. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:4-6a); Joel 2:28-29; Acts 13:1)
<b>A Healing Station</b>	We believe our church is to be a catalyst for bringing healing in our broken society. (James 1:27; Matthew 25:35-40)
<b>Unity</b>	We believe our church should actively seek to bring unity in Christ across racial, denominational and cultural boundaries while remaining biblically faithful. (John 17:20-21)
<b>Penetration of the Culture</b>	We believe our church and every believer must strive to understand our times and uncompromisingly strive to establish Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in all aspects of life. (1 Chronicles 12:32; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22; 10:31; Colossians 3:17,23; Proverbs 21:3)
<b>Evangelism</b>	We believe that lost people matter to God. Therefore, we believe the responsibility of every Christian is to reach the people God has placed within that Christian's sphere of influence. (Luke 5:30-32; Matthew 18:12-24)

### Concern with PCUSA

While different viewpoints can help challenge us to grow in our faith walk, our denomination has taken a series of steps that cause us, as a church, to question whether we should look to move to a different Presbyterian denomination.

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### Biblical References

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Exodus 20:13	You shall not murder.
Exodus 21:22-25	If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.
Deuteronomy 30:19	This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.
Psalms 106:34-38	They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to false gods. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood.
Psalms 127:3-5	Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.
Psalms 139:13-16	For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
Isaiah 44:2	This is what the LORD says — he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you
Jeremiah 1:5	Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.
Jeremiah 32:32-35	The people of Israel and Judah have provoked me by all the evil they have done—they, their kings and officials, their priests and prophets, the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem. They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline. They set up their vile images in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molek, though I never commanded—nor did it enter my mind—that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

## Abortion

- Galatians 1:15                      But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles
- James 1:21-27                      Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

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### Denominational (PCUSA) Stance

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| 1647         | Westminster Catechism      | <i>"neglecting or withdrawing the lawful or necessary means of preservation of life...and whatsoever tends to the destruction of the life of any" is sinful. Further, it teaches that our Christian obligation includes "protecting and defending the innocent."</i><br>(The Shorter Catechism, 7.068 and 7.069) |
| 1869         | General Assembly Statement | <i>"This Assembly regards the destruction by parents of their own offspring before birth, with abhorrence, as a crime against God and against nature...."</i><br>(1869 Minutes of the General Assembly, pp. 937-938)   |
| 1962<br>1965 | General Assembly Statement | <i>"The fetus is a human life to be protected by the criminal law from the moment when the ovum is fertilized....As Christians, we believe that this should not be an individual decision on the part of the physician and couple. Their decision should be limited and restrained by the larger society."</i>   |
| 1970         | General Assembly Statement | <i>"Women should have full freedom of personal choice concerning the completion or termination of their pregnancies."</i>  |
| 1972         |                            | Language regarding "personal choice" and "responsible decision" regarding abortion began to appear in church documents.  |
| 1983         |                            | GA adopted language affirming abortion as a "stewardship responsibility."  |
| 1988         |                            | GA Stated Clerk James Andrews filed an amicus brief with the US Supreme Court in support of "abortion rights."   |

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

## Abortion

- 1992 General Assembly Statement *"Problem pregnancies are the result of, and influenced by, so many complicated and insolvable circumstances that we have neither the wisdom nor the authority to address or decide each situation."*
- It considers moral judgments to be a matter of each woman's individual interpretation of what is right or wrong in her particular crisis situation, and
- "...acknowledges circumstances in a sinful world that may make abortion the least objectionable of difficult options."*
- Further, current policy states that
- "...no law or administrative decision should limit access to abortion; limit information and counseling concerning abortions; or limit or prohibit public funding for necessary abortions for the socially and economically disadvantaged."*
- 1996 General Assembly GA rejected an overture affirming that *"partial birth abortion of a live fetus, except to save the life of the mother, falls short of God's plan for humankind."* (In 1997, PCUSA did adopt a position expressing "grave moral concern" about partial-birth abortions.)
- 2006 General Assembly Statement *"When an individual woman faces the decision whether to terminate a pregnancy, the issue is intensely personal....Humans are empowered...to make significant moral choices, including the choice to continue or end a pregnancy."*
- 2009 PCUSA's Washington Office fought efforts to remove abortion coverage and funding from the national health care bill.

**Over the past 20 years**, in each General Assembly a motion has been made to have PCUSA affirm the sanctity of life and oppose abortion. None of these motions have been approved.

**PCUSA currently** advocates for abortion in the following ways:

- stated position** *"the considered decision of a woman to terminate a pregnancy can be a morally acceptable, though certainly not the only or required, decision."* PCUSA's sexuality curriculum teaches that, *"...it can be an act of faithfulness before God to intervene in the natural process of pregnancy and terminate it."*
- financial support** PCUSA actively supports and endorses the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (formerly the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, RCAR) and Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options (PARO). Both organizations are featured on the PCUSA website.
- medical benefits plan** PCUSA's plan pays for abortion without restriction

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

Israel

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### Biblical References

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- Genesis 12:1-3                    The LORD had said to Abram, Go from your country, your people and your father's household 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.
- Psalms 83:1-5                    O God, do not remain silent; do not turn a deaf ear, do not stand aloof, O God. See how your enemies growl, how your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. Come, they say, let us destroy them as a nation, so that Israel's name is remembered no more. With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you—
- Isaiah 41:8-10                    But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
- Isaiah 54:4-10                    Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, says the LORD your Redeemer. To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.
- Jeremiah 31:31-33                    The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

Israel

Malachi 3:6-7

I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty.

John 4:21-24

Woman, Jesus replied, believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

Romans 11:1-6

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me? And what was God's answer to him? I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

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### Denominational (PCUSA) Stance

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## By slim margin, Assembly approves divestment from three companies doing business in Israel/Palestine

June 20, 2014

### [General Assembly News](#)

Bethany Daily

With audible gasps from those in the plenary hall, the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on Friday narrowly approved divestment from three United States companies doing business in Israel-Palestine.

By a vote of 310-303, the Assembly approved an overture calling for divestment from Caterpillar Inc., Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions, companies some allege are engaged in “non-peaceful pursuits” in the region. A similar overture failed 333-331 at the 220th Assembly (2012).

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## *Scripture and Denominational Stance*

*Israel*

Although divestment was its most debated item, the overture also affirms the PC(USA)'s commitment to interfaith and ecumenical dialogue and relationships in the region, and a preamble was added on the floor to reinforce that, saying, "The PC(USA) has a long-standing commitment to peace in Israel and Palestine. We recognize the complexity of the issues, the decades-long struggle, the pain suffered and inflicted by policies and practices of both the Israeli government and Palestinian entities. We further acknowledge and confess our own complicity in both the historic and current suffering of Israeli and Palestinian yearning for justice and reconciliation."

Immediately after the vote, Moderator Heath Rada reaffirmed that, saying, "In no way is this a reflection for our lack of love for our Jewish sisters and brothers."

### **Overture:**

**In service to God's love and justice for all of the people of Palestine and Israel, and in accord with international law concerning self-determination and human rights, the Presbytery of San Francisco overtures the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:**

- 1. Instruct the Presbyterian Foundation and the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to disinvest from Caterpillar, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions, in accord with our church's decades-long socially responsible investment (SRI) history, and not to reinvest in these companies until the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee of the PC(USA) is fully satisfied that product sales and services by these companies are no longer complicit in**
  - a. the building and security of illegal Israeli settlements, which U.S. foreign policy, and most recent U.N. fact-finding mission determine to be an obstacle to peace;**
  - b. the construction and maintenance of walls and fences that illegally encroach upon Palestinian lands, destroying Palestinian rights to own property and pursue livelihoods;**
  - c. the management of checkpoints that dehumanize Palestinians and cut off innocent civilians from their property and natural resources;**
  - d. contributing to and profiting from the relentless, five decade long, military occupation of the Palestinian territories.**
- 2. Affirm that this action underlines the worsening situation in Palestine, calling attention to**
  - a. the occupation of Palestine, which destroys lives and entire cultures, and for the sake of justice between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, that it needs to end;**
  - b. the violation of Palestinian human rights; through home demolitions, constricting movement for work, school, personal needs, business, essential (and emergency) medical care; and the illegal mass political imprisonment of Palestinians;**
  - c. the disproportionate impact on the Christian minority due to restrictions on family unification, housing, the isolation of Bethlehem and other conditions of occupation;**
  - d. the failure to attract investors to Palestinian businesses choked by the occupation matrix, the blockade of Gaza, and restrictions on the West Bank economy, which adds more than 20 percent to business costs in Palestine.**
- 3. Recognize that while the 220th General Assembly (2012) called upon the church to pursue only nonviolent investment in Palestine and Israel, we still profit from companies engaged in violent pursuits in Palestine, by providing equipment and materiel supporting illegal occupation, contrary to our church position.**

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## *Scripture and Denominational Stance*

*Israel*

4. Direct the Stated Clerk to:
  - a. Communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils and entities, and invite and strongly encourage those groups and organizations that hold assets in Caterpillar, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions to disinvest as well.
  - b. Inform our ecumenical partners of this action, nationally and globally—particularly within Israel and Palestine—encouraging them to hear this witness and to also consider applying socially responsible, human rights criteria to other companies in their portfolios that are complicit in the occupation of Palestine.
5. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to monitor developments in international law and related to the occupation, to continue to advocate conditioning foreign aid for Israel to compliance with human rights law, and to support all measures designed to provide for viable statehood and a shared Jerusalem, including protection for Christian and Muslim as well as Jewish holy places.

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## Committee recommends rejection of making distinction between modern and ancient Israel

June 17, 2014

### [General Assembly News](#)

Bob Sloan

Despite a general consensus that recent military actions by the present state of Israel are a grave concern, the Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations chose Tuesday to recommend rejection of a proposal that the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) make a distinction between "ancient" and "modern" Israel.

The issue came to the Assembly from the Presbytery of Chicago, prompted by the heading "God's Covenant with Israel" in *Glory to God, The Presbyterian Hymnal*.

After hearing a host of decidedly opposing views, the committee voted 39-22 to recommend disapproval of the overture, which called for the Assembly to distinguish between the biblical terms that refer to the ancient land of Israel and the modern political state of Israel. It also requested the development of educational materials regarding the distinction between ancient and modern Israel to be distributed to presbyteries and congregations.

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

## Marriage

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### Biblical References

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Genesis 2:24	That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.
Leviticus 20:13	If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.
Jeremiah 29:5-6	Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.
Mark 10:6-9	But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.
Romans 1:21-27	For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.
1 Corinthians 6:9-10	Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.
1 Corinthians 11:11-12	Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

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Ephesians 5:25-33	Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
1 Timothy 1:9-10	We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine
1 Timothy 3:1-3	Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.
Hebrews 13:4	Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

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### Denominational (PCUSA) Stance

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1978	General Assembly	Definitive Guidance (wherein homosexuality a labeled “sin”) adopted by General Assembly; ordination of homosexuals prohibited; concurred by PCUS General Assembly in 1979
1986	General Assembly	General Assembly reaffirms 1978 Definitive Guidance
1993	General Assembly	General Assembly reaffirms 1978 Definitive Guidance
1996	General Assembly	Fidelity and Chastity (G-6.0106b) added to <i>Book of Order</i> as Amendment B – prohibits ordination of practicing homosexuals and other people who persist in other sexual sins
1997	General Assembly	General Assembly votes to overturn Fidelity and Chastity; Amendment A rejected by presbyteries
2001	General Assembly	General Assembly refuses to acknowledge “the singular saving lordship of Jesus Christ.” GA votes to overturn Fidelity and Chastity; Amendment 10-A rejected by presbyteries

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| 2006 | General Assembly             | Peace, Unity and Purity (PUP) received and adopted; General Assembly issues Authoritative Interpretation to allow scruples over Fidelity and Chastity (effectively creating "local option")   |
| 2008 | General Assembly             | General Assembly votes to overturn Fidelity and Chastity; Amendment B is rejected by presbyteries. But GA also voided all prior judicial rulings and Definitive Guidance on homosexuality; undoing 30 years of process and washing away the record of PJC rulings.  |
| 2010 | General Assembly             | General Assembly votes to replace Fidelity and Chastity with milder language; Amendment 10-A is approved by presbyteries  |
|      |                              | The following provision that is currently in the <i>Book of Order</i> (G-6.0106b) will be changed:  |
|      |                              | <i>Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.</i>  |
|      |                              | The new language (Amendment 10-A) will read:  |
|      |                              | <i>Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G. 14.0240; G- 14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.</i> |
| 2011 | St. Johns<br>(May 18, 2011)  | Session issues a letter to the congregation after a majority of Presbyteries approve Amendment 10-A, ratifying the amendment to change the Book of Order. Letter assures members that St. Johns will continue to affirm its belief in the authority of Biblical Scripture.  |
| 2011 |                              | Ordinations of non-celibate LGBTQ people begin in other PCUSA churches  |
| 2014 | General Assembly             | General Assembly approves overture to redefine marriage and Authoritative Interpretation to allow same-sex "marriage" ceremonies in PCUSA churches by PCUSA clergy in states where it is legal (civil law now dictates our polity, not Scripture). Amendment 14-F passed in a majority of presbyteries and becomes effective June 21, 2015. The amendment preserves the right of clergy to not perform any marriage that is contrary to their understanding of the Scriptures. The PCUSA has officially arrived at the "everyone does what is right in his own eyes" position on marriage.  |
| 2015 | St. Johns<br>(April 3, 2015) | Session and staff letter to the congregation (following a 6-21-2014 GA response letter to Presbytery) stating belief that the broader church has strayed from the foundation of Holy Scripture, after being notified that a majority of Presbyteries have approved Amendment 14-F (including the Presbytery of St. Augustine), ratifying the change to the Book of Order.   |

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### Biblical References

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Isaiah 55:6-7	Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
John 3:16-18	For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
John 14:1-7	"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."
Acts 4:10-12	then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.
Romans 5:1-8	Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 10:9-13	If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

# St. Johns Presbyterian Church

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

## Salvation

1 Timothy 2:1-7

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

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### Denominational (PCUSA) Stance

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|------|-----------------------|---|
| 1647 | Westminster Catechism | <i>The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fullness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person, forever.</i><br>(The Longer Catechism, #36)  |
| 1910 | General Assembly      | General Assembly adopted set of five “essential and necessary doctrines for Presbyterian ministers. These “Five Points” included<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The inerrancy of the Bible,</li><li>2. The virgin birth of Christ,</li><li>3. Christ’s substitutionary atonement,</li><li>4. Jesus’ bodily resurrection and</li><li>5. The authenticity of miracles.</li></ol> |
| 1924 | Auburn Affirmation    | <b>The Auburn Affirmation</b> stated that Presbyterians must “safeguard liberty of thought and teaching of its ministers”; prohibit the restricting of church teaching to rigid interpretations of Scripture and doctrine; and refuse to rank ecclesiastical authority or the authority of the Bible above that of the individual Spirit-led conscience.                                    |

# St. Johns Presbyterian Church

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

## Salvation

1967	General Assembly	<p>GA adopted a new <i>Book of Confessions</i> that contained The Confession of 1967 (C7) It carries a new set of ordination vows in which the person ordained acknowledges that the Bible <b>may</b> contain the Word of God but is “nevertheless the words of men” and promises only to be “guided” by the confessions of the church.</p> <p>Prior to that 1967 PCUSA had ordination vows that required officers to subscribe to the Bible as the Word of God and to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in Scripture.</p>
1981	Judicial Commission	<p>The General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission upheld the ordination of Mansfield Kaseman. When Kaseman was asked, “Was Jesus God?” he responded, “No, God is God.” Later he explained, “Saying Jesus is one with God is a better way of saying it ... but I, too am one with God.”</p>
1989	Presbyterians for Renewal	<p>The Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians and Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns merged to form Presbyterians for Renewal (FPR)</p>
1993	Reimagining God Conference	<p><b>Reimagining God Conference</b> planned, held and largely funded by PCUSA personnel at denominational expense. Conference leaders denied the existence of a transcendent God and ridiculed the crucifixion of Jesus: “I don’t think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff.” Worship leaders offered prayers to the goddess Sophia and replaced communion with a honey and milk ceremony.</p>
2001	Confessing Church Movement	<p>GA spent a great deal of time considering controversial proposals regarding interfaith relations and worship. One commissioner offered a motion that the assembly declare “<b>the singular, saving lordship of Jesus Christ</b>”. It was defeated as being characterized by its opponents as “disrespectful to other religions”.</p> <p>Since the assembly was unable to affirm the sole saving nature of Jesus without equivocation <u>The Confessing Church Movement (CCM)</u> was started. They aligned themselves with three foundational truth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Bible alone is the Word of God and our sole authority for faith and life;</li><li>2. Jesus Christ alone is the Way of salvation, the Truth of God’s Word and the Life of the Church and</li><li>3. The Holy Spirit continues to work to bring people into conformity with the will of god, toward holiness, including living within fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness.</li></ol>
2005	(2002 – 2005)	<p>The CCM resulted in the New Wineskins Initiative.</p>
2008	General Assembly	<p>GA modified a report which acknowledged that Jews, Christians and Muslims worship a “common God”. But the Assembly Approved a call “<i>To encourage congregations of these faiths to celebrate religious holidays together, setting aside days of worship during which there can be congregational suppers, and dialogue groups.</i>”</p>
2011	(2005 – 2011)	<p>The New Wineskins Initiative became The New Wineskins Association of Churches and ultimately they formed a partnership with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church EPC.</p>

# St. Johns Presbyterian Church

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## Scripture and Denominational Stance

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2011	Fellowship of Presbyterians	A movement began that became the Fellowship of Presbyterians - reclaiming a covenanted biblical community within the PCUSA where unity is derived from a clearly articulated theology, where the common mission is making disciples of Jesus Christ, and where a new generation of leaders could be nurtured to speak the gospel into a rapidly-changed world.
2012	General Assembly	GA disapproved Overture 07-12 to Amend G-2.0104b to Clearly State the authority of Scripture as the Most Important Basis for the Ordination of an Office of the Church.
2014	The Fellowship Community	The Fellowship Community was formed by blending Presbyterians for Renewal (PFR) and The Fellowship of Presbyterians.
2014	General Assembly	Disapproves Amending G-2.0104b by Replacing "Guided by" with "Obedient to" in Reference to Scripture and the Confessions.

## RELIGIOUS AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PRESBYTERIANS, 2011 FINDINGS FROM THE INITIAL SURVEY OF THE 2012-2014 PRESBYTERIAN PANEL

*The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, ruling elders (formerly known as elders), and teaching elders (also known as ministers). For most analyses, teaching elders are split into two groups based on current call: pastors, serving congregations, and specialized ministers, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. This report offers results from the initial survey completed in fall 2011 by the 2012-2014 Panel.*

### Dimensions of Belief

✓ About two in five members (42%), ruling elders (45%), and pastors (41%)—but only a fourth of specialized ministers (27%)—*strongly agree* or *agree* that “only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.”

✓ Around one-third of members (37%) and ruling elders (30%)—but only one in ten pastors (11%) and one-quarter of specialized ministers (23%)—*strongly agree* or *agree* that all the world’s religions are “equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.”

	Members	Ruling Elders	Teaching Elders
Number of surveys mailed .....	1,913	1,942	2,368
Number returned as undeliverable .....	40	31	50
Number ineligible or incapable of responding .....	21	7	5
Number of surveys completed .....	1,036	1,424	1,512‡
Response rate .....	55%	74%	65%

‡ Of the 1,512 returned surveys, 1,088 came from pastors and 424 from specialized ministers.

The survey was mailed in September 2011, with returns accepted through February 2012. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. In general, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

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### Terminology

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<b>Pluralism</b>	Is the belief that every religion is true. Each provides a genuine encounter with the Ultimate. One may be better than the others, but all are adequate. Pluralism does not necessarily say that all will be saved, only that all religions are <i>capable</i> of leading to God
<b>Universalism</b>	States that sooner or later all people will be saved, that all humankind will certainly eventually inherit eternal life.
<b>Inclusivism</b>	Claims that one religion is explicitly true, while all others are implicitly true and that God accepts an 'implicit' faith in lieu of explicit faith in Christ. That while there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ, that He will extend His mercy to many who lead moral lives but may have incomplete, or no knowledge of Him in this present life.
<b>Exclusivism</b>	Is the belief that only one religion is true, and the others opposed to it are false; that salvation is <i>only</i> possible through Jesus Christ, and that all followers of false religions are bound for Hell. Only a minority of human kind will finally be saved.

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### Lack of Denominational (PCUSA) Church Discipline

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John Shuck

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2015/03/17/im-a-presbyterian-minister-who-doesnt-believe-in-god-2/>

Though I self-identify as a Christian and I am an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I raised eyebrows a few years ago when I [posted an article on my website](#) about how my personal beliefs don't align with those of most Presbyterians.

For example, I believe that:

- Religion is a human construct
- The symbols of faith are products of human cultural evolution
- Jesus may have been an historical figure, but most of what we know about him is in the form of legend
- God is a symbol of myth-making and not credible as a supernatural being or force
- The Bible is a human product as opposed to special revelation from a divine being
- Human consciousness is the result of natural selection, so there's no afterlife

In short, I regard the symbols of Christianity from a non-supernatural point of view. And yet, even though I hold those beliefs, I am still a proud minister. But I don't appreciate being told that I'm not truly a Christian.

Jim Rigby

<http://www.jimrigby.org/> ; <https://www.facebook.com/jim.rigby.12/posts/978042405603900>

"Resurrection" is not the property of the Christian religion. The story of Jesus' resurrection is one cultural inflection of a universal affirmation- that life and death are parts of a bigger process that somehow transcends our individual spans. "Resurrection" is a symbolic affirmation of the life process